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NEIGHBOURLY LOVE.—P. 74.

NEIGHBOURLY LOVE;

EXEMPLIFIED IN

TWO JUVENILE TALES.

EDITED BY

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NEIGHBOURLY LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

HEADS ON FIRE.

THERE were two little girls sitting at work one evening with their mother. They all three looked busy and cheerful. The room was poor, but very neat. A bright fire, and a tea-table all ready spread, looked very comfortable.

“ Tryphie,” said the mother, “ I think I hear the boys coming in.”

Up started both little girls.

“ Tryphie dear, don’t be in a hurry. Open the door quietly, and tell them to make haste and wash their hands, for tea is waiting.”

“ Yes, mother,” replied both little girls.

The door was opened, the boys came in hot and breathless, went to wash their hands, and then every one sat down to tea.

There was but just room for the five chairs round the table, and if all were not careful, a little elbowing might take place.

“Nesie,” said Andy, “do sit still !”

“Andy,” said Nesie, “leave me alone !”

“Hush !” said their mother, “I do not like to hear you speak so to each other. If Nesie presses you, my boy, come nearer to me.” And she made way for him as she spoke, giving his arm such a loving little squeeze as might drive away any ill-humour.

“No, no, mother dear, I do very well. Don’t let me crowd *you*, of all people.”

“How did you get on at school, to-day ?”

“Well, mother, I got all good marks, and was sent up.”

“What does being ‘sent up’ mean ?” asked one of his sisters.

“Sent up to the head-master, and have it marked in a book that I had done a lesson very well for my age, Tryphie.”

“And what was that lesson ?” asked the other.

“Writing out by heart yesterday’s reading in History, Tryphie dear.”

“How inconvenient it is,” said Nesie, “that they are both Tryphies.”

“I suppose you are used to it,” laughed the two together. “You cannot call us Phena and Phosa.”

“*You* always call one of us ‘Tryphie dear,’ Andy, and that makes a difference,” said one little girl, thoughtfully.

“Do I?” said he. “I did not know it.”

They were twins these Tryphies ; and their father, who was very fond of Scripture names, having induced his wife to consent to her eldest son being Andrew, and the second Onesimus, thought himself fortunate indeed to have twin daughters—“Tryphena and Tryphosa would suit so well !”

He did not live to see them six years old, but he had so insisted upon their both being always called “Tryphie,” that no one thought of trying “Phenie” or “Phosie” as an improvement. They were very much alike, excepting that whereas Tryphena was slight and pale, seldom ailing, yet always looking delicate, Tryphosa was much stouter and more robust-looking, though much more liable to illness, and a greater anxiety to her mother.

The boys were slight, but strong and active, lively, and full of fun ; Nesie especially sometimes letting fun run on to mischief.

Tea was over ; the little girls “cleared away,” “washed up,” and “put away” very quickly and quietly, took their books, and sat down to learn their lessons, while the boys went to fetch theirs.

Tryphosa’s nose was almost *in* her books, and her hair very near the candle, when her brothers entered. Nesie, seeing this, pushed Andrew

(who was passing next to her) against her chair. The shock made her bob her head *into* the flame. Fizz ! went the hair with a violence that startled every one, and Tryphosa screamed. Tryphena put it out with her hands. Her mother, having ascertained that the child was only frightened, soothed and consoled her, and reproved Nesie for his cruel frolic.

“I did not mean to set her on fire,” cried he.

“But you meant to give her a very unpleasant start and surprise. You might have burnt her face and clothes. Shall I tell you what it reminds me of ?”

“Oh, yes, mother !” cried Tryphosa, looking up.

“Did it happen when you were very young, mother ?” said Tryphena, whose hands were smarting a great deal, though she said nothing.

“And do you remember all about it ?” asked Nesie.

“I remember all I was told about it, Nesie ; but I was not able to see it all myself, for I was not there. I was about your age—ten years old.”

“Where were you, mother ?” asked Tryphosa, who was lying back in her mother’s arms, pleased to be made much of, and very comfortable.

“I was ill of some kind of fever. My father’s

business was in London, but the children had been sent away out of town to escape the fever. We had all just had the measles."

"All of you, mother?" asked Nesie.

"All who were born then," replied she, "eight of us. It was just at the time of an election—you have heard of that—and my father had been obliged to go with a very clever gentleman to one of those elections far down in the country. There were no railroads then all over England; the first had not been opened much more than a year, and the journey took him a great many days away from us. One of my sisters, Mary, the clever one, was ill of the measles, and when my father was gone, my mother, looking round us children, said, 'I believe they are going to *amuse* me while their father is away by all having the measles.' I saw she did not look very much *amused*, but I little guessed what a trial she was to go through, poor dear! You know what the measles are, I think?"

"Oh, yes, mother," cried Nesie—

• " ' Hot and red,
 And fuggy in bed—
 Nothing to eat,
 And no one to greet! ' "

"I did not know much about it, then—not even so much as that, Nesie, but I soon did, for

my mother was right. The next day my brothers and I were put to bed, two of the little ones next day, and the two others a little later. My second brother, Bertie, was very very ill—the only one who was really in danger. My poor mother, she was alone, but God helped her, and she had her Bertie safe when his father came home, and all the rest doing well.

“I was not very ill, but did not seem able to get well ; and the reason soon appeared, for I had another fever coming on, and then it was that my two brothers and Mary were sent away for fear of their having it also.”

“And not the little ones ?” asked Tryphena.

“They were not well enough : two of them had but only just had the measles, and one was still in bed. They were put into rooms downstairs, and did catch it. But ah, this is not the story.

“Mary’s pretty hair had all been cut off, and she wore a cap. One evening, when she and her brothers were playing together, Bertie took off her cap and put it on his own head, going to look at himself in the glass, the others holding the candles.

“Whether they pushed him, or he them, or whether he moved his head or they the candles, was not exactly known, but in a moment Bertie’s head was in a blaze, and the cap *would not* come off ! The more he pulled at the strings, the

tighter were they tied, and the others and he tried to put out the flames with their hands, but not succeeding, the two elder children took the water-jug, and emptied it over him !

“ Their presence of mind put out the fire, but poor Bertie’s frolic had ruined the cap, and given him a serious cold and cough that kept him at home almost as long as the measles had done, and made him delicate for a long time.”

“ And did Mary catch cold without her cap ? ” asked Tryphosa.

“ I believe she did,” replied her mother, smiling ; “ but as she was much stronger than Bertie, and had not just had so severe an illness, we did not think so much about it, nor, I am sure, did she. She was always full of thought for others, and Bertie was a great pet of hers, and indeed of everyone’s.”

“ Was it wrong of them to put Bertie out with the water-jug ? ” asked Nesie.

“ Think again, Nesie. How could it be *wrong* ? It was not very good for him, but better than being burnt, and showed some presence of mind in such little things, for they were only eight and nine years old, and Bertie was but seven.

“ But now, my darlings, the lessons must be learned ; Tryphie is quite consoled ; Nesie has, I am sure, resolved never again to play ill-natured or thoughtless tricks on purpose to frighten little

sisters or any one else ; and we are all ready to finish our evening better than we began it."

The lessons were learned. Tryphena, having finished first, went away to prepare the beds for her mother, Tryphie, and herself in the next room. When all had finished, the boys' beds were made in the sitting-room, their mother read evening prayers, and they all went to bed. When her mother kissed Tryphena's cheek that night, she said, in a whisper,

" Well done, my darling ! To suffer in silence for those we love, is one way of not letting our left hand know what the right hand doeth. Is the pain gone now ? "

Tryphena's heart was so full she could hardly answer ; and the words, " Yes, thank you, dear mother," were stifled in the kisses she gave her.

CHAPTER II.

AILIE.

WHILE the children slept, their mother lay awake ; the story she had told them had carried back her thoughts to that far time when she was a child at home ; in a home very different to the one where she was bringing up her own children. She did not tell them so, it might have made them discontented, and for herself she had long learned to be content, and to know that outward things are all *comparative* ; that is, that poor as her two rooms might seem, compared to those of which she was thinking as she told her story, they were yet beautiful compared to many others near them ; and though she might find it difficult to teach and feed and clothe her children upon her scanty means, she was rich compared to some of her neighbours, whose living was to be gained, of course, day by day, by hard labour. Her children she knew *must* labour, she was bringing them up to do so, and Andrew had obtained a place as little clerk to a law printing-

office in the neighbourhood, and was to begin the next day, going there regularly, and attending evening instead of day-school; but for a few weeks he was still to sleep at his mother's house. Nesie wanted to help in a stable, but his mother did not quite like it for him. She said, however good the coachman he was under might be, a London mews was a great place for idle men and boys, whose ways and words were not exactly what she wished her bright-faced little Nesie to learn. He said then that he would go to sea as a cabin-boy, and study and travel; that he would get leave to stand an examination as naval cadet, and be an officer in time.

His mother smiled at this bright hope; but would not thwart nor discourage him further.

So Nesie thought his way of life was settled also,—and he often talked it over with Martin and Tony their nearest and pleasantest neighbours.

Martin and, Tony were—one nine, the other eight years old, and their sisters Alice and Maggie a little older; so that the four children of one family ranged with the four children of the other family, Tony being a little younger than the twins, and Andrew and Ailie just the same age.

They were often together, and went to the

same schools. Their mothers sometimes met to have a little quiet talk, and if there was any little pleasure Tony's father could give his boys, he generally asked one or two of the widow's children to join them. He was a kind-hearted man, and respected Mrs. Aylmer's quiet endurance of great sorrows and great losses, and he liked her way of bringing up her noble boys, and gentle little girls. His own boys were to be apprenticed, one to a grocer, the other to a mercer, old friends of his, and his girls were also promised, one to a milliner, and the other to a lace-shop, as soon as they should be old enough to work.

And the Tryphies? They did not know—no one knew yet more than this—that they were to "learn obedience at home" by their mother's side, and grow up like her, gentle, loving, steadfast women, serving God and man for her sake.

About this time Mrs. Aylmer expected Nesie and the Tryphies home to dinner. (Andy was not to come home that day; he was at the printing-office before eight, and was not to return till seven.) She thought she heard some one crying in the street, and some one laughing—two sounds that never seem to suit each other very well—so she looked out, and saw, to her surprise, Ailie Mervyn screaming

with passion, Tryphosa crying, and Tryphena trying to comfort them both ; while Maggie and the boys laughed loudly, and Nesie was pummelling Martin with all his might, but not much success. Mrs. Aylmer went to her door, drew in her own little girls and Ailie, and called to Nesie :

“ Nesie, come here.”

He knew he could not disobey that quiet voice, and came directly. Martin and Tony went shouting away, and Maggie with them.

Mrs. Aylmer drew into her arms Ailie, still quivering with her sobs, and Tryphosa, whose tears still flowed.

“ Now, you two little girls,” said she, “ tell me your trouble, unless Ailie had rather not, in that case I will take her home.”

Ailie could not speak, but she clung closer to her friend.

Tryphosa could not tell her story for crying.

“ Ask Tryphie,” said she, between her sobs.

Tryphie being desired to tell the tale, did so.

“ It appeared that it was History-lesson day at the school, and that Ailie had made one or two mistakes which were set right by younger girls, and was rebuked by the teacher, and told she should go into a little class if she did not pay more attention. Ailie cried, and had a bad

mark for temper, and was sent to sit in the cloak-room till school was over. When they had all come out, Ailie was looking blue-cold and miserable, and the other girls pitied her, and were kind; but Maggie jeered and said, 'She should learn her lessons better, then. We all had the same lesson.'

"‘But you had not all such a headache as I had when I tried to learn it,’ said Ailie, crying again.

“Just then the boys had come up, and had asked what was the matter, and had heard her last words. Then they mocked at her, and said she had a headache whenever she was cross, and said she was ill three days out of the seven, and that she was growing crosser and more careless every day; and that no one ever called her if they wanted anything kind done for them. And this had made Ailie cry so bitterly, that Tryphosa had spoken up for her, and said it was very hard to learn lessons or work about with a bad headache, and that she was very sorry for her; and so I said too, “added Tryphena. “But Maggie and Tony laughed louder than ever, and Martin turned upon poor Tryphie, and said ‘every one knew—’ ”

Here one Tryphie stopped short, and coloured, and the other sobbed aloud—

“Knew what? Tryphie, speak out.”

But Tryphie could not ; and Nesie broke in eagerly :

“ He said, every one knew how her mother spoiled and petted HER, and that was why I flew at him, mother ; he said *you* were wrong, and I could not stand that, you know ? ” said the boy, looking ready to fight again.

“ But my boy,” said his mother, kissing his glowing face, “ though I thank you for not liking to hear anything untrue said of me, I cannot have you fight all those who think differently. How do your tempers prove that I do *not* spoil my children ? I fear they would rather prove the contrary, Nesie. Truth *never* needs defence of evil passions, dear children ; and if every one had remembered that, there would not have been so much blood shed in religious wars, as they are called. I do not like that expression, nor the one of pious frauds. ‘ Truth needs nor force nor fraud.’ You must beg Martin’s pardon for your violence, and Tryphie for her pettishness.”

“ We can’t say he was right, mother ? ”

“ But you can prove him wrong, if you do not behave like spoiled children ; and you know his opinion is of no consequence. Your fault is all we have to judge, is it not ? ”

“ Yes, mother. Must we go now ? ”

“ The sooner the better, and come back to

dinner. Ask if I may keep Ailie till the evening."

Ailie nestled closer to her friend. Her sobs were fewer and fainter now, but her eyes were heavy, and her head throbbed, so that she could hardly lift it to thank her kind friend.

Mrs. Aylmer bent down, and kissed her forehead.

"Poor child," said she, "how it burns, does it not? How much suffering for one moment's anger. Poor little Ailie! it is a sad thing to be passionate: I know, for I was so once."

"Passionate—like me—you were?"

"Listen to the character I will draw for you of myself, and you shall see if it is like any one you know. Lie still. Tell me if my talking makes your head worse?"

Ailie lay still, and the calm, gentle voice, far from disturbing, stilled and soothed her.

"I was the eldest of the family, but had less strength of body—perhaps of mind also, but certainly of body—than my next sister and brothers. We always were together, at lessons and play, and in both I was often "lag-last," partly from laziness, and partly because, without being seriously ill, I was often too unwell to get up for a few days, and thus lost time. Often, too, when not obliged to stay in bed, and not liking to say I was ill, the walks or the games

tired me so soon that I disliked them, and often then felt as if I could not learn my lessons when the time came. I was often peevish while feeling all this, and yet trying to do like the rest; seeing every one more clever and active and gay,—finding that if any service were needed, I was never the one called; however, I was known to be weak, awkward, and easily vexed."

Ailie answered, "How like me!"

"My dear mother," continued Mrs. Aylmer, "took great pains with me, had me much with her, and tried to discover why I was so unlike the others, so irritable, lazy, and selfish. Some people said it was because I was more delicate and more spoiled; but one of my little sisters was much more delicate, and never became irritable nor lazy. Now I understand that it was because my life was a striving after impossibilities. Had I told what I felt, my strength would have been sufficient for all I should have had to do; and I should not have been irritated by failures I could not avoid. But God taught me a lesson, Ailie."

Ailie looked up.

"He gave me first a long fit of weakness in my eyes, so that I could learn nothing, nor go out for many weeks; then the measles and two fevers, all close together; and after that a long,

long time of weakness, and doctors, and baths; and different attempts to cure me of all they had left behind ; so that my idleness was cured by not being able to do anything, my pride and passion by the feeling of my own weakness and nothingness ; but most of all by the feeling that God was very near me, had given me pain to bear for His sake, had ever loved me, and was thus saying to me, ‘ My child, give me thy heart.’ Ailie, Ailie, dear, He says so to you also. All the headaches, and fever, and weariness—all the little mortifications of vanity—all the great disappointments in serving those we love, are sent to teach us not to set our hearts on any thing or any one but God. Bear them for His sake, work for His sake when you can ; but when you cannot, do not be vexed or discouraged—still less, be envious of, and angry with, those who succeed better. I know it *is* a trial to see younger ones doing so much better than we do ; but it must not make us envious nor so desponding as to give up trying our best ; God knows all. I have suffered much, Ailie, from always wanting to be quiet or alone in whatever I was doing ; it is a great fault not to know how to be equal or inferior. Ailie, will you come to me sometimes and tell me of your troubles, now you know they are like mine ? ”

Ailie raised herself up, threw her arms round

her kind friend's neck, and kissed her gratefully.

"It seems like my own story," said she. "Oh! can I ever become gentle, active, and helpful—no trouble to any one, but a comfort—as you are?"

Mrs. Aylmer's eyes shone through her tears.

"You can do much more than I, dear Ailie; remember that verse, 'I can do *all things* through Christ which strengtheneth me.' Give Him your heart, fear not."

CHAPTER III.

UNCLE BERTIE.

TRYPHENA had guessed that her mother wished to speak to Ailie alone, and that Tryphosa would ask her to accompany her, and she had therefore left the room with her and Nesie ; but as Tryphosa did not say, "Come with me, Tryphie," she remained in the bedroom, on her knees, praying for Ailie, for whom she was very sorry.

When she heard the others return, she went down to them, and heard that Martin had laughed, and said it did not matter ;—Nesie could not trust *him* ; and his mother had said Ailie might stay if she behaved well. So Ailie dined and spent the day with the Tryphies, who for her sake gave up their afternoon school.

She got better, and was very happy during the day ; and by the time her father called for her, was nearly as well as usual. Mrs. Aylmer begged her to tell Maggie she should be glad to see her also ; but she pressed Ailie to return often.

When Ailie was gone, the children naturally

talked of the day's events, and expressed great surprise at Maggie's treatment of her sister. "It is difficult," said their mother, "always to consider yourself as wiser or better than some one else, without showing it very unpleasantly sometimes ; and I fancy Maggie gets a good deal of praise, and Ailie a good deal of blame, each perhaps a little more than is good or useful."

"Mother," said Tryphena, "Ailie told me you had comforted her by saying you had been passionate also : *could* that be true ?"

"Yes, dear, very true. The illness I told you of last night, subdued me very much ; but such was my nature, and God sent me just the lesson I needed, as He does to each of us."

"What lesson did He send to Aunt Mary ?"

"She was always a better child—more gentle, obedient, and unselfish than I was ; and though of course she had faults, none that required such severe lessons. She grew up a blessing and comfort to all around her, and is so still, thank God ! Tryphosa, you are like her in face ; will you try to be like her in her sweet temper and active, unselfish ways ?"

"Yes, mother," replied the little girl, "and like you too."

Nesie came in, and they had tea, and had learned their lessons before Andy returned. His

mother had prepared a little supper for him, and they were all anxious to know how he liked his work and his master. He was tired, but very much pleased to be, as he said, "beginning life."

His mother said she hoped it really would be beginning life—the life of an active "soldier-servant" unto the end.

Andy smiled, and told her he hoped so too. Nesie was going to tell him of the morning's affair, but Tryphena, guessing his intention, stopped him, and whispered, "Ailie and Tryphie had rather not, I am sure." And the good-natured little fellow desisted.

"Mother," said he, "do tell us more about your little days; and Uncle Bertie, you said he was a great pet with everyone. Was he spoiled?"

"Oh, no. Kindness never spoils noble natures, Nesie. If my 'little days,' as you call them, amuse you, I will think of something more to tell you when Andy is ready."

"Oh, do not wait for me, mother: let me go into the other room, and you can begin as soon as you like," said Andy. "I shall learn more quickly if I think I am not keeping you all waiting."

"Go, my son," said Mrs. Aylmer. "But," added she as he closed the door—"but—"

“ We *will* wait for him,” said the little girls, guessing her thought.

Nesic, disappointed, but ashamed to be the only selfish one, held his peace.

“ Did you see Martin and Tony this afternoon, Nesie ? ” asked his mother.

“ Yes, mother ; they said their mother was vexed at Ailie’s being so often ill, and that her father thinks she is only lazy.”

“ Poor Ailie ! I do not think she is lazy. I fear she is often ill, and that she does not treat it so as to get wiser or happier by it.”

“ Wiser or happier, mother ? Is that what illness makes people ? ” asked Tryphosa.

“ It is what it ought to make them, dear, if it is taken by them and by their friends as a message from God. But then it must be fairly met by every one as a truth to be neither hidden, nor grumbled at, nor disbelieved in, nor made too much of, but just confessed, accepted, attended to, and endured cheerfully, for God’s sake.”

Tryphosa came round softly, and kissed her mother’s cheek. She was often ill herself, despite her stout, ruddy appearance, and she knew why her mother always desired her to tell her exactly what she felt, once, and then to make no fuss, but take quietly whatever was ordered for her, were it lessons, physic, rest, work, or play.

She allowed no peevish complaints of unavoidable discomforts, but she was vexed if her children concealed the truth about their health, as about anything else.

Ailie's parents were extremely tender, and listened to her fretful complaints of heat and cold, and thirst and pain most devotedly when she was so ill as to be *evidently* suffering ; but they thought it either wiser or more natural to treat her, directly she was able to run about again, as equal to the life of Maggie and her brothers. They had made her and Maggie begin going to school the same day ; and Ailie was so often prevented attending, that though a year older than Maggie, and quite as quiet, if not quieter, she soon fell far below her sister's place in school ; and this mortification helped to discourage her. Had she been sent a year earlier, she would have gained start sufficient to have maintained her place with a little effort. As it was, she grew more and more indolent, depressed, and irritable.

Andy now came in, and said that he knew his lesson ; would his mother tell them about Uncle Bertie ?

“ When your Uncle Bertie was a very little boy,” said she, “ some one heard him use the word ‘ honour,’ and asked if he knew what honour was.

“ ‘Yes, yes,’ said he, eagerly, ‘I know what honour is—I know what honour is. Honour is not to tuck the cunies.’ He could not say ‘currants,’ so you may see how little he was by that.

“ Another day, we children were all playing before the fire in a very small room, and our mother said it was dangerous, and that the first who ran so close to the fire should go out of the room.

“ A little while afterwards we missed Bertie. Where could he be? We hunted through that room and the next, and then I opened the door on the staircase. There he was! standing outside the door. We asked him what he was doing there, and he answered,

“ ‘Mother said the first who ran close to the fire should go out of the room. I ran close to the fire, so I came out of the room.’

“ My mother was very much pleased, called him in again, kissed him, and said he was an example of obedience to us all. And so he was. He was a very good child, and a neat, clean little fellow in every way. How he loved his Bible Stories, and to ‘talk about God,’ as he called it!

“ When he was four years old, I used to hear him say his prayers every evening; and if I was naughty myself, my mother used to say that I

should not go to teach Bertie, for he was more fit to teach me. She was right. I was too fond of leading and guiding others ; and Bertie gained more prizes for good conduct than I ever did. Still, as I was older, of course I could teach him more things, and he used to call himself my son. When he was asked his name, he would say, 'I'm son !' which puzzled two good ladies, I remember, till it was explained to them."

"Did he die very young, mother ?" asked Andy, gently.

"He went to sea, my boy," said she, sadly, caressing Nesie's head, "and I never saw my Bertie again."

"Was he pretty ?" asked Tryphosa.

"He was pale and fair, with very dark blue eyes, and a face like a statue when he was still, lit up with fun and feeling when he spoke. Yes, I thought him very pretty, and so clever ! He used to say things quite gravely that made every one else laugh ; and he never said the same thing twice. He was a pretty, witty boy, and, more than that, he was a good and pious child.

CHAPTER IV.

PAIN AND PLEASURE.

A FEW days after this, the children were at school in the morning, and Mrs. Aylmer was sitting alone when she heard a tap at the door ; it was Ailie's mother. "I thought, Mrs. Aylmer," said she, "that you would excuse the liberty—I wanted so much to ask you about my Ailie ; she's always complaining, she does not get on like her sister, and she's unhappy, and cross, and makes every one else wish she would be well like other people."

"No doubt so would she herself wish," said Mrs. Aylmer, smiling. "How is she to-day ?"

"She's been better, and more cheerful, ever since the day she spent with you. But she is not prosperous like other children ; and her father thinks it's half laziness and shamming, but I can't think *that*."

"Nor do I," said Mrs. Aylmer. "From her face I am sure she suffers, though she may

hardly know from what cause. What does she complain of?"

"All sorts of things ; but most of being so cold and so tired,—always 'so tired,' she says."

"Have you shown her to a good doctor yet ? I am going to see a very good one,—an old friend of mine,—to-morrow ; let her come with me, and he will tell us whether there is any reason for her being so chilly and so tired. As to her temper, you know, Mrs. Mervyn, if she is trying to do, with some ailment upon her, all that the others do with their health and strength, it is as if she ran a race with lead in her pockets : she must fail."

"Yes, certainly," said Mrs. Mervyn.

"Well, suppose you and I were to lose a race, or a walking wager, because we had lead in our pockets that we could not get rid of, and did not like to own it, don't you think we should find it hard to have been *forced* to run, and then be jeered at for failing ?"

"It would be better not to start, or to start, saying, we were weighted."

"That is just what I tell my own children ; while they are little they must tell me of their *lead*, that I may know how they start in the race. When they are older they need confess all burdens to God alone. Try, dear Mrs. Mervyn, and get Ailie to tell you quietly what

she feels, and then never to refer to it again ; this will prevent her getting into the habit of complaining or grumbling. Many people think they bear illness well, because they say nothing about what really is trying them, but murmur at everything else. The heat, cold, weather, place, people, circumstances, all are wrong."

" Surely, it were better to say, ' I am not well,' and complain of nothing and nobody beside. We are always afraid of children's liking to be ill, and made much of. But we always treat them as if they were strong and well, unless they are really laid up. Do you do so, Mrs. Aylmer ?"

" No, indeed, I do not. I do not find them wish to avoid any of their little duties, and I always have taken care, that if they have little extra indulgences on account of their being a little ailing, they have something to give up also. They are never anxious to be on the sick list an hour longer than necessary. Tryphena and Amelia are almost too impatient of the necessary restrictions on their liberty. Here are the children. Shall I call for Ailie ?"

" Yes ; I shall thank you very much."

So the next day, while the children were at school, Mrs. Aylmer called for Ailie. The child had been rather alarmed when her mother had told her she was going to be shown to a

doctor; but Mrs. Aylmer's smiling face reassured her. They had a long time to wait, and Ailie was getting quite frightened again, so Mrs. Aylmer began telling her stories, and so passed the time, until a neat maid-servant opened the door, and said—

“Now, madam, this way, if you please.”

The doctor was very kind; he asked Mrs. Aylmer some questions, and Ailie some, looked at her chest and arms, and back, and head; asked if she ever had a pain in her back or shoulders, would she show him where it was; took her into the next room where there was a sofa, to show how she liked to lie when the pain was bad, and told her to lie still and rest, for that he could see it was already there (to which she assented), while he looked at Mrs. Aylmer. He went back with Mrs. Aylmer, and wrote down some directions for Ailie; but he said that the greatest care would be needed, for that she had a weakness in the spine and chest, that was coming to a dangerous point, and might make her for life a sickly, deformed woman, even if she lived to grow up. She must lie down whenever her head ached, and always after walking, writing, or any fatigue. She must sit as little as possible, and if she sat badly, never to be scolded for it, but sent to lie down directly.

Mrs. Aylmer gently told Ailie's parents this

on her return, and said that she had asked if there were no danger of making the child think too much about her health, and he had replied, that for such health as that, care and attention *must* be paid at any risk, and that the mind was usually in such cases active, energetic, and only too willing to over-exert the body.

He had said that she would probably become rapidly weaker for a time, and must certainly give up school.

This was a great blow to them.

“Give up school!” said they, “why, she will know nothing.”

“Do not tell her she is to give up school, it will discourage her; but tell her she is to take these medicines, and lie down a great deal to see if that cures her. Does she ever complain of her back?”

“Not much; but says she is always so tired, so very tired and cold.”

“That is it. I told the doctor so, and he said that is the fever that some children—not all—have with this complaint. Do you think you shall have time, Mrs. Mervyn, to read to her? She might learn much in that way. I am often at leisure in the afternoon, if she likes to come and lie upon my little sofa when you are too busy to read to her, I will teach her a little. You know I am used to it and fond of

it. I only send my little girls to school because they require more time than I can give them ; but I shall take them away by-and-by for half the day."

This plan pleased Ailie's parents very much ; and it sounded very well. Ailie had the whole attention of a kind, cultivated teacher, and now her little body was not aching with the fatigue of walking to school, and sitting on a hard form. She could give her mind more thoroughly to the subject before her, and though she still had pain to suffer, and some days it was so severe that even Mrs. Aylmer's lessons were too much, and the poor little pale lips were firmly closed that no sound might escape them, even those days were not lost, for Mrs. Aylmer, while tenderly placing cushions, or supporting in her arms the suffering child, would whisper two or three words of patience, hope, and courage, that soothed her mind, as the aconite she applied soothed the body.

Ailie's mind was growing fast : living much with older people, hearing her father's conversation with her mother, or with Mrs. Aylmer in the intervals of his visits, led her to think of higher and deeper questions than those who get on best at school, and though she had never been told she was not to return there, the weeks

had passed on, her time had been filled up, her weakness had increased, and she no longer thought about going to school with Maggie. All rivalry was at an end, and Maggie and the boys seeing how real the great doctor had thought their sister's headaches and "tiredness," felt ashamed of their former jeers and hard unkind disbelief, of which Ailie never seemed to think now, and showed her kindness and attention that quite won her grateful heart.

"How kind every one is now," said she.

"They would have been so always, had you been as you are now, in their eyes,—a real but uncomplaining sufferer. We cannot expect people to guess what we try to hide, and only let out in cross tempers; moreover, that seems to be unreasonable," said Mrs. Aylmer. "But Ailie, dear, you must watch and pray still. Knowing that you are ill makes people avoid putting vexations and temptations in your way, it is true; but that does not prove that you are really less easily vexed."

"How shall I be sure?" said Ailie.

"Observe when vexations arise, which they will do some day, if you still think things happen or are done on purpose to vex *you*."

"How do you know I used to do so?" asked Ailie.

“I know my own heart, Ailie, dear; observe whether you are selfish still—whether it still is your first thought. How does this affect *me*? Illness brings new dangers; selfishness is one of the greatest, and needs constant striving and praying against. Is the pain coming on, my child?”

“A little;” and Ailie turned away her face, that her kind friend might not be grieved, for it was a very severe fit that was coming on, and she was learning to command herself for others. Presently she felt the gentle hand apply the aconite, and heard the gentle voice murmur softly—

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

“Sing it,” gasped she.

And the sweet notes rose on the air, and seemed to Ailie to still her pain.

The voice fell a little lower—

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly—and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest—and ye shall find—rest unto your souls.”

There was a pause, and the sweet strain began again in another key—

“He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, and gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom.”

Ailie turned round—her eyes full of tears—
“ Oh, dear, dear friend, this has been the
worst pain I have had yet, and you have made
the happiest moment of my life.”

CHAPTER V.

“TRIALS.”

THE weeks went on, and the children's lives went on also without much change. Martin, Tony, and Maggie went to school, and did fairly well there. Nesie was writing better than before, and, like the Tryphies, was intent upon gaining prizes at Christmas, especially the prizes for Arithmetic and History. Tryphena was very clever and quick at both; but Tryphosa was less frightened when questioned, which is a very great advantage. Maggie hoped for the Geography and History prize, and talked much of it. Andrew was at the head of the boys' school when he left, but his master could not be expected to wait while he gained his prizes. Ailie, undisturbed now by envious thoughts, and able to interest herself in what she learned for its own sake, was very anxious to hear all about the hopes and fears of the others. It was cold weather now, and she could no longer even cross the street to come to her friend. She had grown very much weaker, and though the doctor had

said that it must be so before she could begin to improve, it was very distressing to her father, and alarming to her mother.

“It really seems, Mrs. Aylmer,” said she, “as if Ailie’s visit to the doctor—for which I am sure I thank you heartily—had laid her, as one may say, on a sick-bed, and as if she got on better before.”

“Mrs. Mervyn,” said Mrs. Aylmer, “did you ever sprain your hand or your thumb?”

“Oh, yes, to be sure. But you don’t mean her *back* is sprained, do you?”

“No; but I wish to remind you how you went on doing all you could, and thinking the sprain was nothing; fighting away with pain, and doing everything slowly and awkwardly, till some one advised you to have it bound up.”

“Yes, yes, I remember; and it was my right hand too. How it did ache, to be sure!”

“But when it was bound up, could you use it better?”

“Not at first. I was obliged to wear a sling, and rest it as much as I could.”

“So that you looked and seemed more helpless, but really suffered less, and got better? Well, may not little Ailie be doing the same? At all events, you know, if she had been *fancying* herself ill, she would have been tired of so many privations long ago.”

"Oh, yes ; no one thinks that of her now.

"I remember a little girl, who was often fanciful, saying she had hurt her back. There was nothing to be seen, and the doctor thought it was a fancy, but said, 'Keep her lying down : if it is real, it is the only thing to do ; and if it is a fancy, it will cure it.' Some of the family said it was all nonsense—she ought to be made to get up and study. Others pitied her, and said she ought to be allowed to get up and play ; but her governess had understood the doctor's opinion, and let her move neither to study, play, nor eat ; for she said, 'If we only pet her, the fancy may continue if it is a fancy ; and if she is really hurt, we cannot be too careful at her age.'

"At the end of three days, the little girl said she was cured. The doctor looked again, but could find no mischief ; and she ran and played as before, and was in no hurry to be again upon the sick-list, for she said,

"'My governess is very kind, but she made me quite tired of being ill and laid up.'

"You do not let Ailie feel that so," was the short but fervent reply of Mrs. Mervyn. "She is quite different now—so patient and gentle ; always thinking about other people, instead of complaining about herself."

Mrs. Aylmer's eyes shone, but she only replied,

“Ailie is bearing her troubles as a message from God. That makes her different. And then—do not you think that her illness makes a difference in the others also ?”

“Oh, yes, that it does ! The boys are more quiet and helpful, and Maggie—well, she *was* perhaps a bit set up by being always set over Ailie, who was older, you see ; but she’s sorry for her now, and says, ‘Ailie’s grown so nice now she’s ill.’”

“Well, dear Mrs. Mervyn, this is a heavy trial for you, but there are some comforts in it, are there not ?”

Mrs. Aylmer said this gently and kindly, and Mrs. Mervyn replied heartily,

“There are, indeed. Thank you for showing them to me, and for all you’ve done for Ailie. I think we are all really the better for knowing the truth.”

“That we are,” said Mrs. Aylmer ; “and though it may make us ‘sow in tears, we shall reap in joy,’ you know.”

“That means another sort of truth, though.”

“Yes, it means truth as to our souls—tears of repentance, joy of forgiveness. We *can* go on for some time without noticing the sickness of our souls: the pain they give us is attributed to some other cause ; but if God, by some sorrow, or trouble, or fear, opens our eyes to our

own state, we do indeed discover a worse complaint than poor Ailie's, and but one remedy—the Cross of Christ, and repentance at the foot of that Cross.

“But you know all this better than I, and I did not mean to say so much, only the subject draws me on. My prayer would always be, ‘Lord, let me know the *Truth!*’”

Mrs. Mervyn had just left Mrs. Aylmer when she met Maggie coming home from school.

“Oh, mother,” cried Maggie, “there's such a fuss at school, and both the Tryphies are in it.”

“How do you mean, Maggie? Are you in it?”

“No, mother; I will tell you. There was the last Geography and History class to-day, and of course we were very anxious to be first, because the prizes are to be given on Monday, and, as far as we know, we four first have an equal chance.”

“As far as you know?”

“Yes; as it is an upper class, they give us ‘counters’ for good answers, and at the end we count them, and so does the teacher, and she sets down the number to our names, and we give back the counters. We keep a list too, each of us, of the marks we each have each time; but that is our own affair.

“Near the end of the class, Tryphena, who

was the first of us four, seemed to have the best chance. She had not missed one question, and had taken up several. (We don't take places—only counters—in this class.) Sitting next to her was Rhoda Simmons, and then Tryphosa ; I was the fourth. Tryphena had answered her question ; it was Rhoda's turn. She did not know ; it was passed to Tryphie and me, and then all down the class, and so to Tryphena again. She knew, and gave the answer ; but while she was speaking, she slipped under the table, and Rhoda called out that she had lost some counters.

“Of course, this put every one out, and quite upset the class. Tryphena was told to get up, but she had her foot under her, and could not at first, and when she did she was very pale. The teacher finished the round, and counted the counters and the questions she had asked ; but it was difficult to be sure because of the taking up. Certainly Rhoda had seemed, just before, to have as many as Tryphie and I, but now she had four less, and Tryphie had two more !”

“Which Tryphie ? Tryphosa ?”

“Tryphosa. As she sat next to Rhoda, Rhoda accused her of having stolen them. Tryphie had her list of questions that she had answered, by her side, and Tryphena had her list of her

own and Tryphie's and Rhoda's. It is a fancy of hers to make those lists, and it never prevents her attending and being ready to take up ; and by the lists, Tryphie had answered one more question and taken up one more than Rhoda, and so had I.

“ Every one was much vexed, of course ; but you see, dear mother, if it is not cleared up, I am first, for the two others will not be reckoned, and Rhoda has fewer counters ; and so the prize will be mine for certain.”

Mrs. Mervyn did not look, perhaps, so flurried as Mrs. Aylmer might have done, had she heard such a remark from one of her children, but she said,

“ I had rather you gained it in some other way, Maggie. Was that all that passed ?”

“ Oh no, mother. The teacher said she must keep back Rhoda and the Tryphies after school, and desired them to go into her sitting-room, and Rhoda to the great school-room. We were in the class-room. But when Tryphena tried to move, she fell down in a faint.”

“ Tryphena ?”

“ Yes ; she had hurt her foot by falling with it under her, and the teacher carried her into the next room, and sent for a surgeon, for she thought it looked odd, I believe. She said she must go back to her ; so she only came in to

tell me to send the doctor, and to tell her mother, and she desired us all not to speak of the lost counters."

"And you have, Maggie!"

"Only to you, mother; I will not say a word to any one else."

At this moment Nesie ran in to his mother's house, and they saw Mrs. Aylmer come out with him directly. She did not seem to see or notice them.

"Poor woman!" said Mrs. Mervyn, "trouble's come to her again, now. But let us go in to Ailie, who will be wanting her dinner. Do not tell *her* about the lost counters."

"No, mother, I will not."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRIZES.

WHEN Mrs. Aylmer entered the school she found one Tryphie crying, and the other consoling her, and assuring her that the pain was not very great. One glance at her face showed her mother how great it was; and one look at her foot made her perceive that the surgeon's visit would not be unnecessary. She had "put out" her ankle, and it was already swelling fast, though the teacher had been fomenting it all the time. The surgeon arrived, and the teacher took Tryphosa to Rhoda, saying she wanted to be quite clear about their story; but very much in order that Tryphosa might not see the operation of setting the ankle. The surgeon having inquired how the accident had occurred, Tryphena grew a little less pale, and said that she had slipped off the chair and had fallen upon her foot, which was twisted under her.

"Very curious," said the doctor, "such a fall as that does not in general dislocate a joint, unless there is some force used and some push given."

Tryphena did not reply. She was very pale and looked faint. They gave her some harts-horn, and then the surgeon said he should advise her going to the hospital, as she could be better attended to ; and that, if her case were not very carefully watched, she might become lame. Tryphena looked at her mother, and felt as if she could not go ; but then, recollecting how much trouble and fatigue she might cause that dear mother, she tried to smile, and said “Thank you, sir ; it will be better.”

He then went away, saying he would send for her in half an hour, and that she must not be allowed to talk or excite herself.

Poor little girl ! he little knew how much there was to excite her.

Mrs. Aylmer went to speak to the teacher, and finding Rhoda with her, and Tryphie, discovered that something unusual had occurred besides the accident. The teacher told her the story as far as she had seen, and added Rhoda's assertion, which however she said she did not herself believe.

Rhoda *now* said that Tryphena had taken the counters and passed them to her sister, and that it was in doing so that she slipped and fell.

Tryphosa denied the fact.

Rhoda said, Maggie could bear witness to

her having done so, and more than once, before.

“Rhoda,” said the teacher, “are you not bearing false witness? I never knew Tryphena or Tryphosa do anything mean or dishonourable.”

If Mrs. Aylmer had been grieved to see Tryphie suffer, she was much more grieved to hear this imputation cast upon her children’s honour. Her own words, one short hour before, came back to her, “Lord, let me know *the truth.*”

She could not believe her children guilty; yet Rhoda boldly accused them, and called Maggie to witness that they had been deceiving their teacher and their companions. She could not ask Tryphena about it, but she resolved to question Maggie closely herself; and her own little Tryphosa would, she knew, never sleep till she had confessed her fault, **IF GUILTY.**

She went back to Tryphena, who looked at her anxiously.

“Mother, you know all?”

“I do, my child, all that is said; but you must not talk, you know.”

“Only one word, mother: Tryphie never did such a thing—she *could not.*”

“I believe you, my child. Hush! here are porters come for you.”

She was warmly covered up, and carried away, her mother and Tryphie following her and seeing her received into the hospital; but they were not admitted with her, and went home sadly enough.

Nesie waiting for news of her, and for his dinner, was there ready for them. The dinner passed silently, and Nesie thought his sister must be very bad, by the depression of the others. His mother saw that, and said to him, "No, my boy, Tryphie will do very well; but I have another matter that grieves me, and that I cannot tell you about at present. Tryphie, dear, it is very late, but you may do as you like about going to afternoon school to-day,—after the events of the morning."

"I think I had rather go, mother," said Tryphie. "Nesie, are you ready?"

And they started together.

Mrs. Aylmer, looking out, saw Maggie and Rhoda just before them; she stepped out and called her children, giving them a message to leave for her on their way. This just detained them till the others were out of sight.

She felt it hard to bear this trial; and, though she approved of Tryphie's wish to go to school, she felt the time long without her, and less willing to go and tend little Ailie than usual. Still she felt that, since the child could not come

to her, she must go, or be guilty of selfishness and neglect of a suffering child, and of a duty she had voluntarily undertaken.

She went, therefore. Ailie was much surprised and touched to see her, and said she did not expect her, knowing of poor Tryphena's accident. She evidently had not heard of anything else, and her gentle loving words of sympathy and sorrow fell like dew on the spirit of her friend.

One hour—two hours passed, and Mrs. Aylmer looking out, saw the little round figures she was longing for coming home. She kissed Ailie and left her, and met Tryphie at the door; the boys were often nearly two hours later, and they would have time for a long conversation before Nesie's return. She asked Maggie's mother to let Maggie step over when she returned; and Maggie's mother said she would do so, and asked if Tryphena could be visited next day.

“Not till Sunday,” was the reply, given in so sad a tone that it told how heavy the mother's heart was at the thought.

Mrs. Aylmer and Tryphie went in; she took her little girl on her lap and caressed her tenderly.

“Now,” said she, “my darling child, tell me all you know about this sad story.”

“Oh! mother, you do not think we did it?”

“No, my dear, I do not think so ; and I do not even clearly see why you are suspected. It does not seem certain that Rhoda had lost any counters.”

“Oh yes, mother, I’m afraid it is, for the teacher made us show our lists this afternoon, and Maggie’s and Rhoda’s agreed. By that we three had the same till the last turn, when Rhoda missed her question ; but that only made *one* less, not four.”

“What does the teacher say ?”

“She says that it is not at all likely that either of us should think of doing such a thing, but if it is not cleared up, she cannot let either of us try for the prize.”

“Maggie says she saw Tryphie hand you something behind Rhoda. *Did* she do so ?”

“Yes ! my pencil, which I had forgotten. She had put it into her writing-book for me ; but that was at the beginning of the class. I wanted it for my task. Oh, mother ! mother ! why must we be blamed ? We did not do it.”

Maggie now came in, her manner rather an odd mixture of bluntness and insincerity.

“Mother said you wanted me,” said she. “I suppose it’s about this business.”

“It is, Maggie. I believe you are a truthful child, in general. Tell the truth now, and I shall ever be thankful to you. What did you

see happen this morning, during the geography class?"

Maggie, thus solemnly addressed, felt inclined to reply by telling the same story she had told her mother in the morning (even then she had not mentioned one or two important little facts); but recollecting all that Rhoda had said to her since, and the prize so nearly within her grasp, she said only,

"I saw Tryphena fall, and Rhoda count her counters."

"Did you see Tryphena take any, and give them to Tryphosa?"

"I saw her give them to Tryphosa."

"What made her fall?"

"I don't know. Reaching over, I suppose."

This was said hesitatingly.

Tryphosa said, "I think Rhoda's counters may have fallen, for I felt her make a sudden move, I suppose to catch Tryphie, and she may have knocked down her counters."

"The class-room was searched," said Maggie, "and even all the books of maps there and in the big school-room opened and shaken, to see if any counters were hidden in them, but there were none."

"Has the head master been told of it?"

"The teacher told him after evening school, and he is going to Mr. Randolph to-morrow, if

nothing is found out, for the prizes are still to be given on Monday."

Mr. Randolph was the clergyman, and he took great pains with his school, and especially with this class, which was an idea of his own.

Poor Tryphie looked frightened.

"Do not be alarmed, dear," said her mother, "if you have done nothing wrong. In any case, speak the truth, and leave shame to those who do not."

She spoke rather severely for her, for she felt sure Maggie was hiding something—she could not tell what; but her face did not go with her words at all. She blushed, and went home directly.

"What reason do they think we could have had, mother, for acting so? Tryphie was nearer the prize than any one, and I was equal to the others."

"Perhaps they fancy she wanted to make sure of your both being first and equal, so as to have two prizes. But they do not know Tryphie. She would *give* up her own prize to you, but never *steal* one for you!"

"Would it be stealing, mother?"

"Of course it would—taking what is not yours. But here comes Nesie. No more such talk before *him*, Tryphie!"

Nesie came in, and the evening was spent as

usual. Andy came in late ; and the history of Tryphena's accident had to be told him. He had heard nothing, of course, and was much grieved, poor boy ; so much so, that he found his lessons very difficult to learn that evening. How small a party they felt themselves without Tryphena ! She was the quietest, but how they missed her voice ! She was the slightest, yet how empty seemed the table without her ! She was the palest, yet how pale and dull did everything look, now she was not there !

The next day was Saturday, and Mr. Randolph went to the school, called the class together, and examined the children separately and collectively. None of them had anything to testify of any importance, except Maggie and Rhoda, and they repeated the same story, supporting each other as before. Mr. Randolph saw truth in the fair features of little Tryphie, he thought, but the circumstances were against her ; and he did not see it in the expression of Rhoda and Maggie, but facts were in their favour. He went to the hospital, but Tryphena was very feverish, and could not be questioned, or even spoken to.

Mr. Randolph decided that neither Rhoda nor the Tryphies should be reckoned as trying for the prize ; but he asked to see the books, that he might make a memorandum of the number of counters and good marks they had

gained, in case anything should be discovered later. And Maggie?

Maggie was rather a difficulty. If she were telling the truth, it would be hard to punish her: she had accused no one until desired to speak. Mr. Randolph decided that she might still try.

Of course she was successful.

Tuesday was the day on which they were to see Tryphena; but the poor little girl's mind had been so agitated, that her fever ran high, and they were only allowed to kiss her, and look at her, and sit beside her.

They had the less difficulty, therefore, in not telling her about the prizes. It would have been a shock to her, for she had never heard herself accused, we must remember.

Monday came—a bright, beautiful winter's day. Mrs. Aylmer, Nesie, and Tryphie went to the giving of the prizes.

There were a good many to be given; and as the very little ones were called first, after Mr. Randolph's few words of address and prayer, it was some time before Tryphie's class was called to receive its honours. The prize for Arithmetic was Tryphena's,—no doubt about that, Mr. Randolph said, and he was sorry she was not there to receive it. The prize for geography should have been hers also; but, owing to an

accusation, that time would, he hoped, prove to have been mistaken, it could not be awarded either to her or to her accuser. He was obliged, for the same reason, to withhold altogether the prize for good conduct, and as this was more important than the other, he should wait one month, in order to give her time to recover from her accident, and for her character for honour and integrity to assert itself, as he felt sure it would do.

The tears shone brightly in her mother's eyes and in Tryphie's also ; and she found that seeing Maggie with her sister's prize was not so very bad after all, if Mr. Randolph still thought well of her. She started on hearing her own name, and found she was to receive a prize for writing, and one for needlework.

The elder classes then received their prizes, and the boys came in for theirs.

Martin and Tony had nothing very brilliant,—a prize for reading, and one for spelling ; but they were little fellows. Nesie had one for maps and charts, which he drew uncommonly well, and one for singing, also, which was taught in this school. He had a beautiful voice, and a very good ear.

And thus were the prizes given.

CHAPTER VII.

SNOWDROPS.

THE prizes being now given, the whole story was, of course, in everybody's lips, and Martin, Tony, and Nesie heard it directly, as well as Ailie. Maggie was vexed to see Ailie's bitter grief at such an accusation being made and believed. She said it was "perfectly *impossible*" for Mrs. Aylmer's girls to do such a thing. When she said this, her mother and Maggie turned upon her, and said she cared more for the Aylmers than for her own people, and Ailie having said once,

"Oh no, indeed, *not*, dear mother; but I do not like them to be unjustly blamed," found that her words did more harm than good, and that it would be better to mourn in silence over the troubles of the Tryphies.

Rhoda had become a much more frequent visitor at their home of late; she and Maggie were often closeted together; she did not care much for Ailie, nor did Ailie particularly take to her; she did not *trust* her.

The boys were pleased that they and Maggie had each a prize to show, and did not think much of the Aylmers' troubles. Their chief subject of lamentation was their father's absence from home, "*just when they wanted him most.*"

As if children knew when they wanted their father most !

And Maggie ? what was her state of mind ? had the desired prize brought her all the joy she had expected ? or had Tryphosa's and Ailie's tears, and Mrs. Aylmer's solemn entreaties, and Mr. Randolph's serious warnings, already taken off the edge of her enjoyment ?

Did she wish she had *done nothing* to procure 'it, except fulfil her duties ? Did she regret, that, whilst at School on Friday morning with Rhoda, in which she had said,

"I think it will be mine—I think it will be mine ; but I wish I was *sure* of it."

"If two were equal, they would give two prizes —you and me, Maggie ;" but Rhoda replied,

"Yes. Not Tryphena and Tryphosa."

"If I saw them getting on too fast, I would check them, only don't you tell, or warn them. Hush ; here they are."

This evil thought once suggested, had taken root. Nothing more had passed then ; but Maggie had *seen*—yes, *seen*—Rhoda push Try-

phena, who was sitting awkwardly on the very edge of the chair, just as she was answering a question. She did *not* see her put into her pocket several counters at the same time. Maggie told the story to her mother, as we have seen, without these little particulars. Rhoda, when relieved, came to her, in order to find out exactly how much she knew; and bribe her to silence.

“ You know,” said she, “ I have gone too far now to go back; if you tell of me, we both lose the prize, and those Aylmers will be made more of than ever, and Tryphena is sure of the arithmetic prize already. I dare say you and I shall both get prizes now; at all events, *you* will, and I like that better than their having it, and my being made to confess; but *you must* say you saw Tryphena give Tryphosa something behind me, and make your list like mine.”

And Maggie had consented, and had told these lies—yes, they were *lies*—what for? To gain a prize, and steal it, for she had no right to it—to help a wicked child to grow worse—to injure two innocent little girls—to grieve their widowed mother, and her own father; yes Maggie knew how he would look did he know all; he who was honour itself in word and deed and thought, and whose great anxiety

about Tony had always been that he was not sure of his truthfulness. But he was absent, and Maggie, unlike the boys, did not regret his absence; for the first time in her life she feared to meet his eye.

Nor did she particularly wish to see Tryphena. She was not very likely to do so. The poor little girl's ankle was not going on well, and the fever of that, and her troubles kept her many weeks at the hospital. Nesie's first burst of indignation, and Andrew's deeper resentment, at the treatment their sisters had received, were lost in the anxiety they suffered for Tryphena's recovery. She had a swelling, like what is called, on the knee, a white swelling, a thing that hardly ever comes in the ankle, and was for some time very ill; but after the first ten or twelve days was able to see them, and then little Nesie it was who told her all she and her sister had been accused of, and of the final arrangement of the prizes. When she heard that Maggie said she had slipped in pushing the counters to Tryphie, she was going to speak, but stopped herself. Nesie went on—

“So now they think you took them and Tryphie kept them; but I say—what eyes your teachers must have not to see all these things; why, we boys should be had up in a moment if we attempted such tricks.”

Nesie was right ; and Mr. Randolph, if he said little, was pretty much of the same opinion, for he took that class himself for some time, and soon remarked that Rhoda, far from being one of the first in real knowledge, was inferior to many whose counters always reckoned less than hers, and he resolved to watch her carefully. We shall soon see the result.

Tryphena was at last able to walk on crutches, and to come back to her home in time for her school. She was very weak, pale, and shadowy, and I do not think Ailie's want of self-command, in bursting into tears when she saw her, was quite inexcusable in one so weak as she herself was. She was expecting her father home also, and that might make her a little more excitable than usual.

Tryphena's mother took her away quickly, for the sake of both little girls, and put her to bed ; and she was rather surprised, later in the evening, when Tryphosa was gone to bed also, to receive a visit from Ailie's father and Mr. Randolph.

They soon told her their business.

“ Mrs. Aylmer,” said Mr. Randolph, “ we are come to tell you that we are in hopes of being able to prove your children's innocence to others. We are quite sure of it ourselves. This evening, Mr. Mervyn came home, and of course his

children soon showed him their prizes, and told him all the events that had attended the prize-giving. He had been struck with Ailie's indignation, and with her asking Maggie,

“ ‘ Did Tryphie fall behind Rhoda ? ’

“ ‘ No ; she fell forward on the right side.’

“ ‘ Was Rhoda on her right hand ? ’

“ ‘ No ; on her left.’

“ ‘ Then how *could* she have been giving anything to Tryphie, behind and beyond Rhoda on the left side, when she fell forward, and to the right. It is *impossible*, is it not father ? ’

“ He was struck with the observation, and said it was impossible, and that he would come that moment to me ; but he wondered no one had noticed that before.

“ Ailie begged him to come at once. She seemed to have been building upon the hope of his doing something when he returned ; and having seen Tryphena that day, made her doubly anxious.

“ Therefore,” continued Mr. Randolph, “ I shall make this known publicly in school to-morrow ; for if this account be proved to be false, everything else must be so, as it all turns upon this. I have reason to suspect that one of the parties concerned is not strictly honest or honourable. The mark-books have been tampered with, and a ‘ 50 ’ cleverly altered to ‘ 66 ’.

and a regular system of keeping back two counters after the sum was entered and set down—as a stock-in-trade for next time—I have myself discovered. This must be known to-morrow, so I do not scruple to mention it to-night. Mr. Mervyn may be thankful if his own little girl escapes the contagion of such an example. I shall be glad of Tryphena's own evidence, for Mr. Aylmer will come and see her in the morning. The walk to the school would be too much for her, I suppose?"

"Thank you, sir," said Mrs. Aylmer, "I think it would; but I could bring her to your house."

"Well, do so at twelve, and I will have the other children there, and the teacher, but not the whole school. That will be better in every way. Good-night."

He gave her his hand, and went away.

Mr. Mervyn waited a little, and Mrs. Aylmer spoke of his journey, and also of the sorrow she felt for poor Maggie's share of the trouble.

"Better so, Mrs. Aylmer," said he—and the strong man's voice trembled—"better so now than hereafter. God knows I love them all tenderly; but I had rather lose them all now for heaven, than see them grow up, 'fit for the devil and his angels:' and such we know are liars. Your children are an honour to you, and I am as glad almost as you are, that the pretty

little Tryphies are to get over their troubles as the snowdrops come through the snow," added he, smiling ; and then, more gladly, " God knows all you have done for my Ailie ; she is growing more like them every day, and sweeter and better she could not be ; and it's your doing. God bless you ! "

" Thank you. Amen ! " said she, her eyes shining.

CHAPTER VIII.

RESTITUTION.

Mrs. AYLMER and Tryphena started in good time the next morning ; for though Tryphena had been using her crutches in the house for some time, they still felt strange to her in the streets, and she was very weak, so that after every few steps she had to rest. While she was doing so, she found herself carefully and gently lifted in some kind, strong arms, and Mr. Mervyn's voice said,

“ That is it, Tryphie dear. Here's your horse ready to carry you, so that you may be all fresh for the Rectory.”

Mrs. Aylmer had taken her crutches, and they went on. It was in the next street but one—a mere step to any one who was well and active ; and Mr. Mervyn would not allow Tryphie or her mother to thank him. He said he was allowed to attend also, and Rhoda's parents, so that every one might see and hear justice done.

It did not take very long. Mr. Randolph spoke to the children in the name of Him “ to

whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid," to declare all that they knew, and invited Maggie and Rhoda, for their own sakes, to speak and confess the truth before he told it for them. "For," said he, "a great injustice has been done to two innocent persons, and cannot be allowed to go on."

"Has any child here anything to say?" continued he, looking round the class.

There was no answer for a minute, but Mary Flaxmore, a little creature, said that she had passed Rhoda and Maggie walking to school on Friday morning, and had heard Maggie say,

"And Tryphena and Tryphosa?"

"Oh, if they are getting on too fast," replied Rhoda, "I can soon check them; but don't tell them."

Mr. Randolph wrote that down, and said,

"Why did you not tell this before, Mary?"

"Because, please, sir, I were away all the time to the holidays. Baby was took ill that same day, and I never came back—I had to nurse him."

This, the teacher said, was true.

"But you were at the class, Mary?"

"Yes, sir; and I saw Rhoda's face when she missed her question. It went all round us, and came back to Tryphena, and then I saw—I saw——"

“What did you see?”

“I saw Rhoda push Tryphena, so as to stop her short in her answer, and send her off her chair; and she took some of her counters up in her hand.”

“Whose counters?”

“Her own, please, sir.”

“Tryphena,” said Mr. Randolph, “why did you not say Rhoda pushed you?”

Tryphena flushed crimson, and her little pale hands shook with agitation.

“I do not think any one but the surgeon asked me how I fell, sir,” replied she.

Every one present felt *why* Tryphena had not complained, and looked at her with respect and affection.

Mary Flaxmore’s evidence made the first part of the story clear; and Mr. Randolph told her she had told it very well, so quietly and distinctly.

“Every one,” said he, looking around, “must now be convinced that *Tryphosa* did not steal the counters; but some may still believe that *Tryphena* took them, and slipped in handing them to her sister. Now all answer me — which way did she fall? Right or left? Forwards or backwards? Against Rhoda, or away from her?”

“Away from her! To the right! Towards!”

He then made three of the children sit down in a row, and showed the class, that if the first of the row leaned back to give anything to the third and lost her balance, she must fall *behind* the second ; but that if the second pushed her, she would fall away from her.

They all understood this perfectly, also.

“ So, then, you see that Tryphena is innocent. Now we must do justice.”

Mrs. Mervyn stepped forward.

“ Sir,” said she, “ my little crippled girl at home, had a great struggle with herself before she would confess all she knew, on account of her sister, but I made her give me this paper.”

Tryphena rose as well as she could, and begged Mr. Randolph not to say more about the prize ; she did not want that, she said ; now that no one thought Tryphosa or herself guilty of so disgraceful an action,—that was all she was unhappy about.

But Mr. Randolph told her that could not be. Ailie’s evidence must be accepted as well as Mary Fluxmore’s, and the matter must be sifted to the bottom ; but he added, seeing how pale she was—

“ You may go home, my dear, now ; this is quite sufficient for you.”

They took her out. She was indeed pale and quite worn out. Mrs. Mervyn carried her home

(she could not have used her crutches now), and her mother put her on the bed to rest.

Mr. Randolph read aloud the paper as follows:—

“I heard Rhoda and Maggie say one day that they had altered the lists, and made up their story wonderfully well, for that no one suspected the truth. I told Maggie I had heard this, and begged her to go and confess everything. She would not, and I told her I should tell father; but still I only could when he saw I was hiding something. I am very sorry to have to say it. But he says Truth and Justice ought to come first.—*AILIE.*”

It was signed “*Ailie*,” and all the children knew the writing, weak as it was. He then spoke of Tryphena’s conduct in not exposing Rhoda, and contenting herself with declaring her sister’s innocence and her own, refusing to take her prize from Maggie, and said she had certainly deserved the Good Conduct prize which had been reserved; and that he thought Tryphena would let Mary Fluxmore go with her to carry it to her sister. Tryphosa and Mary thanked him, but their voices were lost, for all the children exclaimed,

“Thank you, thank you, sir!”

All, except Maggie and Rhoda.

“Rhoda,” said he, severely, “if you were a

little older you would be sent out of the school altogether. I shall, however, considering you are so young, even younger than your real age, only put you into the little class till Easter. If your conduct and your improvement satisfy me till then, you shall return to your companions. You have been guilty of several great sins, and of some of them I shall have occasion to speak to you more freely in private; but this must be generally known, you have been detected in cheating as to the number of your counters, altering your private list, and the school-books —look here. Are not these your figures? You no doubt hoped to gain the prize for Diligence, to be given at Easter, by the help of these marks; but finding the books had been touched, I have desired new books to be made out from Christmas, and kept out of sight, therefore you have gained nothing. Your conduct to Tryphena and Tryphosa has been cruel and base; but your conduct to Maggie has been worse. The injury you did to the Aylmers' good name has passed by, and left them higher than before in every one's estimation. Tryphena's sufferings, of which you were the cause, may, please God, pass away also; but to Maggie you may have done eternal injury; you have persuaded her to begin a course of deceit in order to secure gain, whereby she has dirtied the purity of her

mind, has grieved her parents, and has fallen low in the esteem and affection of her friends, and has sinned grievously against her God. It will take her long to recover from this ; but if she is truly penitent she will here confess her fault, and beg pardon of Tryphie for the injury she did her by false accusation ; and of all her companions, for having deceived them and given them so bad an example ; she will then go to Tryphena and Ailie and beg their pardon ; and her own parents' pardon ; and she will come to evening church to seek forgiveness of God. She will give up being so anxious to be *first*, and will strive to keep steadily to her duty in the place to which God has called her."

Maggie stepped forward, gave one look round the room, seemed to wish to speak, but her courage failed her, and she rushed out of the room.

"Let her go," said Mr. Randolph, "she is probably gone home to tell all to her parents ; and you, my dears," said he, "and the other children may go too. Rhoda must wait ; and, Tryphie, here is the prize for your sister. Her name is written in it."

It was a beautifully bound and illuminated "Pilgrim's Progress," from his own library.

Happy and proud were Tryphie and Mary as they carried the precious book, slung in a hand-

kerchief between them (therefore much less safe than it would have been in the hands of either of them); and happy and proud also were all the other little girls of the class, who *would* accompany them in procession—

But we must leave them to their happiness, and remain with Mr. Randolph, Rhoda, and her parents.

As soon as they were alone, he said, “Rhoda, since I have taken this class I have watched you; you have every time told me the number of your counters, and kept back two or more, which you added to these gained last time. Thus, if you had six and I put down six, the first time you kept back two; and supposing you received seven next time, you had nine with these two, nine were put down, and you kept two or three for the next time also. Shall I tell you how I know this? Look here,”—he showed her a list he had kept each time of the counters given to each child, a dot standing for each counter, and the numbers put down in the book, thus:—

Maggie	10
Tryphosa	9
Rhoda	9

That he had counted the counters before and after each class, and that there were always two

or three missing, exactly agreeing with the surplus in Rhoda's number the next time. That he had resolved to try her during six weeks, in order to be quite sure ; and that the facts were but too plain. "Now, Rhoda," said he, "I have not explained all this to the other children ; they only know in a general way, that you are not trustworthy, besides having seen it for themselves in the matter of the prize. I do not wish you to gain a character for deceit, and therefore shall say nothing more this time. You will leave this class till Easter, of course, and I shall watch you ; but if ever I find you cheating again, I shall be obliged to warn every one against trusting you. I say to you as I said to Maggie, confess your sin to God, to your parents, and to those you have injured ; and try to improve. You are but a little girl, and by God's help, may live so as quite to cause all this sad story to be forgotten."

Rhoda looked mortified and sullen rather than humbled ; and her parents, though they thanked Mr. Randolph as they took her away, seemed to think her still more to be pitied than blamed.

They went away ; and Mr. Randolph, as he took his hat to go out also, thought within himself over the characters of these children he was *helping to grow up* in the love and fear of

God ; and then dismissed them from his mind with a prayer, and turned his steps and his mind towards the almshouses where he was going to read prayers.

Maggie had run straight to Tryphena to beg her pardon, and to offer to give her that prize lawfully hers ; but Tryphena persisted in refusing it, saying she never could accept it knowing how very much Maggie had wished for it. Maggie had declared that she would not keep it, after all Mr. Randolph had said who should have it.

“ Ah, I know,” said Maggie, “ and if you and Mrs. Aylmer, and Mr. Randolph, all agree, I shall feel that you have really forgiven me ! Tryphie shall have it ! She is equal to me in counters. You will not take it—I cannot keep it—let her have it ! And here they are all coming down the street, so do say quickly, yes, and forgive me once more all my ill-conduct.”

Both eagerly forgave her, and assented to the proposal ; and Tryphosa made no difficulty about accepting—for she said,

“ I shall consider it as a present from you two ;—but now look here, Tryphie, here is your Good Conduct prize, and we are all so pleased, they would all come and wish you joy of it.”

Tryphena rose on her elbow, colouring a

bright pink, to look at the book and the inscription—

To TRYPHENA AYLMER,
Prize of Good Conduct,
Christmas, 1862.

“Patient in Tribulation.”

and to thank her kind and eager little friends. They did not remain long, for it was every one's dinner-time, and they dispersed like a flock of birds ; Maggie remaining till the last, to whisper to Mrs. Aylmer, “ Shall I ever be like Tryphena, do you think ? ”

Mrs. Aylmer's reply was a kiss, and “ By God's blessing you may be, and do all things, Maggie, my child.”

CHAPTER IX.

A GREATER PRIZE.

As Mr. Randolph left the almshouses, a messenger said to him—

“Sir, you are wanted at Mr. Mervyn’s.”

“I will go directly,” said he.

And while he is walking there, we will accompany Maggie, who left Mrs. Aylmer’s, and her three children (for Nesie had come in, too) admiring the book, and purposing to dine in haste, for it was nearly time for afternoon school.

As she crossed the street and entered her home, she felt as if she could not go fast enough to claim the forgiveness of her parents and Ailie, and own her sense of the sorrow she had caused them. She opened the door quickly, there was no one in the sitting-room; but in the bedroom next to it there were several persons standing with grave figures (for she could not see their faces), but their way of standing showed that they were in great trouble, and Maggie felt awe-struck, and went forward softly.

They were standing around Ailie's little bed—she lay upon it—white, with pale lips, as she often was after her fits of pain; but now her eyes were closed, and the doctor was watching her, and silent tears were dropping like quiet rain down the grieved and loving faces around her.

Ailie was dying. The moment she had written that paper, a severe fit of pain had begun, which had ended suddenly in a death-like swoon, and she had gone from one fainting fit into another ever since.

Maggie went forward softly, yet her sister heard her light little footstep, and murmured—

“Maggie! forgive!” and opened her arms. They made way—and Maggie and Ailie were locked in a fond embrace. Ailie's arms fell; she had fainted again. The doctor held her wrist, and tried many things to restore her; but she was in so dead a faint, that he said she might never revive again, but pass away thus.

He was mistaken, however.

Mrs. Aylmer had observed the doctor go in, and fearing Ailie was less well, she saw her children out for school, and Tryphena happy, reading her book and resting, and came over to see her little friend. She saw at once how it was. She bent over her, kissed her, and whispered, “My child, the race is nearly run,

the cross of Christ shall be thine exceeding great reward. Amen."

Ailie seemed to hear, for the faintest shadow of a smile crossed her lips, and she tried to raise her head, as if to meet another kiss.

It was fondly, tenderly, given.

"Peace be with this house, and to all that dwell therein."

Secretly, soothingly, fell the sounds on those sorrowing hearts. Mr. Randolph came in, and prayed with, and for the departing child in the beautiful language of our Church. When they rose from their knees, she had entered into her rest. Ailie was in Heaven. She had received a better prize than Tryphena's, a nobler joy than the one for which poor Maggie had so falsely but fervently risked all. The little frail body, worn to a skeleton with suffering, was laid to rest, and the bright and purified spirit, made to suffer as her Lord suffered, that she might be with Him where He is, was for ever rejoicing in His presence.

Mrs. Aylmer remained some time with the poor Mervyns; the father was broken down with grief, the mother almost distracted, and poor Maggie's despair was fearful.

It was nearly evening before she could leave the poor sorrowing ones, and go back to Tryphena, who was still alone.

“Mother,” said she, “how did you find Ailie? Is she very ill?”

“She was very ill, Tryphena, very ill indeed, and her sufferings have long been so severe, that it was evident that her strength was failing; but I did not think it would have been so soon. Yes, my child, Ailie is gone—*hers* is the better prize, Tryphie,” said she, caressing her little girl, who was too much stunned by the news to weep at first. “We are still left to sorrow and suffering, but dear, patient little Ailie is at rest for evermore.”

Tryphena wept long in silent agony.

“Oh, mother!” said she at last, “I did not know—I did not pray—I did not see her!”

“Every agitation made her faint away, Tryphie, therefore I could not fetch you before the prayers,—and indeed there was no time, as all happened so quickly. I have been so long away because of the agony of the rest—*hers* was all over almost directly I went in.

Here Tryphosa came in, crying violently. She had heard the sad news from one of the neighbour’s children. Maggie’s absence from school had not much surprised her; for Rhoda was absent also, and it was easily understood that they would not very much wish to show their faces again that day. But poor Maggie had a deeper cause for her absence.

Nesie who had heard of Ailie's death also, quickly followed his sister, not caring to stay and play as usual with the other boys, which was what generally detained him.

The three talked sadly over Ailie's short history, her sufferings, and her happy change of character, and of poor Maggie's visit of repentance that morning, and of the sorrow she would now suffer, poor child, in the loss of her sister.

Mrs. Aylmer left them, and went to meet her boy Andrew. He still came home of an evening for a visit almost every day; but he slept at his master's. She knew his tender heart and thoughtful character, and did not like to let him hear by chance what must grieve him so much.

She met him, and after talking a little with him, sent him in to see Tryphena's prize and hear about all the events of the day, while she went to see if she could assist her poor friends by taking Maggie *or* the boys into her house for the night.

They had so little room, that they gladly accepted this friendly offer, and she brought back Maggie *and* the boys. Andrew was still at home, and he gladly assisted in placing his bed for the two little fellows, and did not go till he had seen Tony safely tucked up in it, and

Martin, half undressed, preparing to follow his example.

The boys slept heavily ; and if the remembrance of their loss troubled them, it was in dreams, and not in wakefulness. But Maggie could not sleep. She turned wearily from side to side, and her tears flowed, though silently, far, far into the night. Mrs. Aylmer knew that her sorrow must have way, and did not attempt to check it ; but when she thought Maggie was finding the night weary, she spoke to her in quiet whispers, of Ailie, of her pain, and weakness changed into rest and peace, just as her fretful temper had been, *by their aid* and by God's blessing, changed into the gentleness and patience that had endeared her to them all.

"And made it harder to lose her !" broke in Maggie. "I could have borne it then ! It was very wrong—but do you know, long ago I used to wish I were the eldest. I thought I should have made a better eldest than Ailie, so I wished she had not been born, or was—— And now she is," said she, "I cannot bear it !"

A deep sob was heard from the other bed.

"Oh, Maggie, Maggie !" cried Tryphena, "do not say that ! We are all sorry for you. But you know, dear Maggie, we *must* bear what God wills. Ailie is happy, and you

can make your parents happy in time, by your loving and dutiful ways."

"Can *I*, Tryphie? *do tell* me how?"

Mrs. Aylmer rose, and lifted Tryphena to the bed where Maggie lay.

"Hush!" said she; "do not let us disturb Tryphosa, now she sleeps. She was very tired." So she left the two little girls together, and lay down herself by the sleeping little Tryphosa.

By-and-by, Maggie's tears ceased to flow. Tryphena's voice sounded lower and lower, till she whispered,

"Mother! she is asleep, and so am I almost. Good night!"

And the household slept.

CHAPTER X.

A GREATER RESTITUTION.

FOR some time after poor little Ailie's death Maggie's father could scarcely bear to have her with him, and this was a great grief to the girl, who wished much to be all in all to him and to her mother. But Maggie, like many of us, had got to learn that in order to be all in all to any one, we must be unselfish, unrepining, have long habits of thoughtfulness and self-denial, and, above all, must inspire confidence. The mortification did her good, however, and when she found how gladly the Aylmers always welcomed her, and made her one of them, she hoped that she should some day become pleasant to her father, who used to think so much of her. Mrs. Aylmer was always afraid she should discover that one great reason of her father's feeling this kind of reluctance to have her with him arose from the fact that it was writing that paper on her account that had *seemed* to put the last stroke to little Ailie's life, and she was glad that Maggie's own mind

never reverted to this. It would have been a needless additional pain, for the life that hung upon such a thread could not have been prolonged. The complaint in the spine had been so rapid and severe with her, that it had destroyed her strength as utterly in a very few months as it does in most people so afflicted in as many years.

Rhoda was in a very uncomfortable state. She was always less liked than Maggie, and now she was much more shunned and avoided. The loss of her sister had softened the neighbours' hearts towards Maggie; her giving up the prize to Tryphosa, and the affection all the Alymers showed her, were much in her favour also. But Rhoda confessed nothing, looked sullenly and spitefully at Tryphena whenever she saw her, took no notice of Tryphosa, and never came near Maggie in all her sorrow.

The winter was passing away, Easter was drawing near, and there were to be one or two prizes given then, unlike those given at Christmas. One was, as Mrs. Randolph had said, for the greatest number of good *marks* altogether since Christmas. Another was for the best written answer to a question given to all the school above eight years old.

The question this time was, "Who was the

bravest of the Patriarchs, and why do you consider him so?"

Tryphena had no chance of the greatest number of marks. Maggie and Tryphosa, and several others, had attended regularly the whole quarter, missing only a day now and then, while she of course had been absent for many weeks. But there was a question prize, as they called it in each class; and this she had tried for, and had some hopes of gaining. Her ankle now allowed her to go regularly to school, with only one crutch or a stick; but it was very apt to twist again, and swell up for a few days and require the help of the two crutches, or even of complete rest. She and Maggie and Tryphosa had not seen each other's answers; but they were all three done, and only required writing out fairly, which was to be done on Palm Sunday, and they were to be carried to the school and judged on Monday.

Rhoda, of course, might not try for this, as she was in the six and eight years' old class, and it vexed and annoyed her much to be left out. She had been carefully watched, and detected in one or two attempts to trick or evade the truth; but yet Mr. Randolph thought that she was improving, and might return to the proper place, though not to the geography and history class. He intended to tell her so that

very day—Saturday before Palm-Sunday, and also to tell the teacher (who had long been aware of his intentions) that after the Easter holidays her place would be supplied by another from the Training Institution, and that he had found for her a school to manage, under his brother, in the country.

On entering the school-room, he saw the teacher, and spoke to her, but he did not see Rhoda. He asked where she was, and was told that she had come to school, looking rather miserable, and complaining of sick-headache, which soon became so bad, that she had asked leave to go home. He heard the children read, went on to visit the boys, and the rest of his parish duties, and thought no more of Rhoda, till he recollect ed that she lived in a place called Burns' Alley, where there had been a case or two of fever.

After school, Tryphosa and Maggie, who were grown great friends, said they should *run* home to have time for some work they were intent upon, if Tryphena did not mind being left behind.

“No,” said she; “only please tell mother not to mind if I am late, because I want to go and see how Rhoda is, she seemed so poorly.”

“See *Rhoda!* with your lame feet!” they

“Oh, yes, it is not far.”

It was not really far, but it was far for Tryphena. She had left the street in which the school-house stood, when she heard some one groan, and saw, sitting on a doorstep, huddled up, poor Rhoda, looking so sick and miserable, it was impossible not to pity her. When she saw it was Tryphena, she turned away.

“What is the matter, Rhoda?” said Tryphena, gently. “Is your head so bad still?”

“Oh, yes! and I’m so giddy, I can’t get along at all; I don’t know how I am ever to get home!”

“And you’ll get worse sitting here. Shall I go and call your father and your mother?”

“Father’s a-bed with the fever, and mother can’t come, for baby’s ill too.”

“Then let me try to help you. It is a pity all the others are gone the other way; but I daresay we can manage.”

“Oh, Tryphena, and you so lame!”

“Not to-day,” said Tryphena, smiling; “but come, for I am sure you are getting worse, sitting on those cold stones.”

Rhoda got up, but her head swam, so that she could see nothing.

“Shut your eyes,” said Tryphena, “and try to walk. Here, lean on my shoulder.”

The poor girl was only too glad to do so.

She was strong, and twice as heavy as her little guide; but no one who feels sick feels strong for the time.

Presently they came to a chemist's shop, and Tryphena asked if they might sit down. The shopman was very civil, and asked what was the matter.

Tryphena told him, and asked if he could give Rhoda anything to help her to get home.

He said, "Oh, yes," and produced a cordial. Tryphena had sixpence (all she had in the world), and she shyly laid it on the counter.

The shopman smiled. He knew her, and would have trusted her.

Rhoda felt better after the draught; and they continued their slow, weary progress.

When they reached her home, she sunk down, however, on her bed, and quite unable to move.

The mother was crying over her baby, and could not move to help Rhoda.

"Oh, Tryphie, is it you? Will you undress her, for the love of mercy? for it's the fever she's got, no doubt, and this little blessed one, and my husband! I shall lose them all, all!"

Tryphena did as she was desired as well as she could, and helped Rhoda into bed, found some vinegar, and tied her handkerchief wet with it round the poor girl's head, and asked when the doctor would come.

“He’ll be round presently. He said my master would want him again by noon, and it’s that, and long past. There he is! No, it’s some one else. Oh, dear! oh, dear!”

Rhoda groaned, and asked for some water. Tryphena gave it to her.

“Shall I stay,” said she, “till the doctor comes? Can I help you? you seem to have your hands full.”

“Oh, do—do stay, Tryphie; Rhoda is quite as bad as baby to mind, and there’s my husband too,—oh, dear! oh, dear!”

Tryphena found a bit of paper, and wrote,—

“DEAR MOTHER,—Rhoda is very ill, and her father, and the baby; and her mother begs me to stay a little while, and help them; so do not be uneasy—you know where I am.

“TRYPHENA.”

She looked out, and saw one of the school boys whom she knew.

“Jimmie,” said she, “will you kindly take that to my mother, Mrs. Aylmer? She will be very much obliged to you, and so shall I.”

“That I will, Tryphie,” said he, and off he went.

Tryphena remained sitting with Rhoda’s mother, hearing her complaints, the groans of

the poor man, and the cries of the baby. She "tidied up" the room and the hearth, asked what they had eaten, and found that the poor woman had been too much distressed to think about it. Tryphena asked if she might make some tea, or some broth, some toast-and-water for Rhoda, and thus employed herself till the doctor came. She listened carefully, and put down all he said about Rhoda and the baby. He said the man had better go to the hospital, and Rhoda too, if she proved to have the complaint ; but that was not certain. He had the man carried off to the Fever Hospital directly. They would not take him in at any other, with an infectious complaint:

The poor woman was so worn out, that she threw herself on the bed her husband had just been lifted from, and lay there with her wailing baby.

Tryphena brought her some broth, and persuaded her to take it ; she then fell asleep, and was asleep when Mr. Randolph came in.

He looked very much pleased to see Tryphena's occupation ; she was wetting Rhoda's head with vinegar, and holding the baby on her lap.

She told him of the doctor's visit, and the poor man's removal to the hospital.

He asked if her mother knew she was there.

“ Jimmie has taken her a note, sir ; but I am sure she will think it right. Rhoda was so sick she could not come home alone.”

“ Do you like doing this for Rhoda ? ”

“ Oh yes, certainly for Rhoda.”

“ God bless you and keep you from all ill, my child.”

Mrs. Aylmer soon came in to see if she could assist. She was a very great help and comfort in illness, and Tryphena was very grateful, for she did not insist upon her going home. She quite understood her little girl’s feeling, and said she would come for her as late as she could.

“ But, my dear,” said she, “ this is the evening for writing out the question you know, have you forgotten that ? ”

“ No, mother,” said she ; “ but I had rather do something for Rhoda indeed, dear mother, only don’t let Tryphosa forget hers.” Her mother kissed her, and felt as she walked home, that she had much to be thankful for in her children.

She came again, later, for Tryphena ; but Rhoda’s fever was then violent, and the poor little baby was in convulsions, and entirely occupied its mother. Mrs. Aylmer knew much of the necessary treatment, and assisted the poor distracted woman, who having but these two left out of six children, was in an agony of fear.

It was a terrible night, for Rhoda was wild

with fever, and the baby's life seemed to be going ; but when the sun rose, the little one was sleeping quietly, his wearied mother dozing also, and Mrs. Aylmer made Tryphena lie at Rhoda's feet, in order to take some rest, though she said she felt no fatigue. She went home herself at her children's breakfast-hour, to give them their orders for the day, and sent them to school and church. Then she returned to await the doctor's morning visit to Rhoda. He arrived just after she had come in, and on learning the account of the night, and looking at Rhoda, said she had better follow her father, and he would send for her.

“ And, Mrs. Aylmer,” said he, “ give all your children this twice a day,” and he gave her a little bottle, “ for there is much fever about, I am sorry to say, just now.” When they had seen Rhoda carried off, and heard the doctor's opinion that the baby would live, Mrs. Aylmer took Tryphena home. She had almost to carry her ; so directly she got home she undressed her, put all the clothes she had had on into lime-water, gave her some of the doctor's drops, and kept her in a dark quiet room all day.

Tryphena was of course more tired than ever she had been in her life, but she thought it very hard to spend such a Palm Sunday as that, she said.

Her mother thought of a beautiful verse,—

“ Meek souls there are, who little deem
Their daily course an angel's theme ;
Or that the cross they take so calm
Shall prove in Heaven a martyr's balm.”

But she only kissed her little girl, and said, simply, “ There is a time for all things, Tryphie, and you may certainly pray lying down when you cannot stand.”

CONCLUSION.

MY story is already almost too long. The prizes were given on Monday. Maggie had the greatest number of good marks. Tryphosa's was the best answer to the question, for Tryphena's of course was not sent in.

She had no prize save the light that shone in her mother's eyes, and in Mr. Randolph's as he said in a low voice, "I was sick and ye visited me."

Rhoda did not die, nor her father, nor the baby ; the only thing that perished that night was the ill-feeling that family had towards Tryphena and her mother. It had died under the soft hands that bathed Rhoda's temples and soothed the baby.

Maggie succeeded in becoming all in all to her parents.

Martin and Tony grew up fine and sturdy young fellows, doing their duty in their station.

Andrew was more than this—he became a learned man, the friend of learned men, a great

and pious man, the friend of good and pious men.

Nesie went to sea and became a mate, but I never heard of his climbing higher than that.

And the Tryphies ? They grew up, like their mother, gentle, loving, Christian women, the light of their households, the warmth and joy of heart to all that knew them and lived with them, their daily life showing by its gentle shining, whose they were and whom they served.

MARGARET LAWRENCE.



MARGARET LAWRENCE.

CHAPTER I.

“Ye are not your own ; ye are bought with a price.”

SUCH was the text of a sermon preached by the vicar of Old Bridge to his flock one Sunday in summer. If you had been there, you would have seen one of those old churches which have so solemn and soothing an influence on our hearts. It was not a beautiful church, but all spoke of care and reverence, and there were many quaint monuments, telling their tale of those who had worshipped there formerly, and are now waiting for the Resurrection. The sweet, warm air, and the perfume of the new-cut hay, came in at the open door, and the song of birds and the humming of bees make themselves heard in the pauses of the preacher. But soon the sermon was ended, and the blessing given, and the congregation began to disperse,

yet lingering before they left the churchyard, for those kindly greetings, which seem never more fitting than when we have joined in offering our prayers and praises to the Father of all.

“How are you to-day, Robert?” asked Mrs. Lawrence of an old man who was slowly wending his way towards the little wicket-gate at the right of the churchyard, leaning with one hand on the shoulder of his young granddaughter, and with the other on a stick.

“Better, thank you, ma’am. This warm weather gives me new life,” said the old man, and tottered on; but before he and his grandchild reached the little gate, they turned aside to visit a grass-covered grave, with a neat head-stone, telling that Mary, the beloved wife of Robert Smerdon, had departed this life July 20, 1840, aged 60. “I had a longing to come here again, child,” said the old man. “All through the spring I thought I never should, till they carried me to lay me beside her. It was just such a summer’s day as this when we laid her here. Well, God is good, and she is at rest. He never fails His people, and He will not forsake old Robert. Let us go home now, for my limbs are weary.”

They went home, Mary supporting her grandfather to the door of the little cottage, which was only separated from the churchyard by the

road and its little garden. A sweet little garden it was on a summer's day, with its woodbine covering the cottage porch, and the cabbage roses under the parlour window, and the broad border under the wall, full of Canterbury bells, double rockets and stocks, and many old-fashioned flowers, often discarded from grander gardens, yet as full of beauty and fragrance as any that have taken their places. Old Robert sat in the arm-chair which Mary had carefully placed in a sunny and sheltered nook. She left him, and went to get their simple dinner ready. His eyes seemed to roam from one flower to another in his garden, and then to dwell on the more distant prospect with an air of deep contentment. By-and-by the girl came back. "Come, grandfather, to your dinner, you must want something after your walk. Are you very tired?"

"Better than I thought to be, Mary, dear," he said. "No one knows the blessing it is to get out, and go to church again, till they've been shut up for months like me. God is very good to me. To think that He numbers the hairs of our heads, and makes all things turn to good, and yet that we can fret ourselves and murmur, as if there was none to care for us. Mary, child, you must trust God better than I have done. You will have your troubles, no

doubt ; but you must always be sure that you have a father in Heaven, who will give you all that is good for you."

But old Robert is not the only member of the congregation of that village church to whom I wish to introduce my readers. There is another in whose heart a chord has been touched by part of the sermon with which my story begins, and this is Margaret Lawrence, daughter of the lady whom we heard inquire after Robert's health a few minutes ago. Margaret is young, while Robert is old. Life is behind him, and before her. He has little or nothing more to do in the world but to wait "the appointed time till his change come," while she looks forward, as only the young can do, to the life which seems to lie before her, wondering what it will bring, not without fears of the changes which she knows to be our appointed portion, and yet full of hopes, longing to have every faculty of her soul called into exercise. And therefore the words which spoke of rest and trust had most come home to the aged pilgrim ; and those which spoke of work to be done, which gave a motive and object for her whole life found an echo in the heart of the young servant of Christ, who had lately at her confirmation taken on herself by deliberate act the holy vows spoken for her by others, while she was an unconscious

infant. Margaret had just "finished her education." We use the words as they are commonly used. Yet is not our whole life here, if we do not entirely miss its purpose, an education for eternity? Is not God Himself our Great Teacher, guiding us gradually onwards as we are able to bear?

Margaret was still expected to devote some time to the improvement of the acquirements she had gained; and she had of course her share of those home duties which fall to the lot of every woman; but her hours were in great measure at her own disposal, and she began to feel a responsibility which she had never known, while her whole day was mapped out for her. She longed for a life of action and usefulness. The common daily round seemed to her too small and insignificant.

Some engrossing pursuit, which should be to her what his science is to a philosopher, or his art to a painter, was her idea of happiness. And now she began to feel vaguely and indistinctly that the service of God ought to satisfy all the cravings of her heart, and to give her an object for the exercise of every energy. She had read of some of those women whose names must always call forth our love and reverence,—of Florence Nightingale, and Sister Rosalie, and Mrs. Fry; and in her dreams of the future she

wove for herself a destiny like theirs. The evening of that Sunday, Margaret sat and dreamed. The time and place were favourable, for the place was the quiet garden, and the time was the time of sunset. By-and-by her mother came and joined her: "What makes you so thoughtful, my child?" she asked.

"I was thinking about the sermon this morning, dear mother, and wishing I could lead a useful life."

"You need not fear, Margaret; we can all do that."

"Yes, mother, but what I can do is so little, it would be all done just as well without me."

"My darling child," said her mother, "let us never think anything little in which we can serve God. Remember the 'cup of cold water.' And besides, if any one ever is to do greater things, the little things must be the preparation. 'He that is faithful in that which is little, is faithful also in much; and he that is unfaithful in that which is little, is unfaithful also in much.'"

Margaret's youngest sister Lucy now appeared to summon her and her mother to tea. If we accompany them, we shall have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the other members of the family. Her father is a middle-aged man, with a very benevolent countenance. He

is a lawyer, and is obliged to leave home every morning soon after breakfast for his chambers in Exeter, returning late in the evening. His children see little of him, except in vacation, when the whole family often leave home for a little trip. Mrs. Lawrence is already known to you. She is pale and delicate-looking, and her face, though somewhat worn, has the trace of considerable beauty. Her son Robert—a boy about thirteen—is at her side, helping her to make tea. There are two little girls—Catharine and Lucy—who are nine and ten years old. One of the party is absent—Edward, the eldest son—who is preparing to take holy orders, and is now paying a visit to an uncle in the north of England. He is Margaret's special friend and companion, though several years her senior. She watches his success in his studies, and firmly believes that she shall see him a great man.

CHAPTER II.

THE morning sun was shining brightly in at Margaret's eastern window ; at last it has crept on to the white curtain of her bed, and roused her from her slumbers. She begins to wonder what o'clock it is, for the light comes so long before we can be expected to get up in summer ; but soon she hears a sound of life ; it is the mowers sharpening their scythes, and so she knows it must be after six o'clock, and gets up. I hope you like to get up early, my dear reader, at least in summer, that you know the delicious sweetness of the morning breeze, and the beauty of the early shadows, and of the glistening dew-drops. It was an effort to Margaret, this getting up, she was so much inclined to lie there, considering what she would do through the day, and making many plans for the future, but that sound of the mowers' scythes decided her, "they are working for their master," thought she, "and have not I also a work to do and a Master to serve ?" She opened her casement window and looked out ; the men were mowing the meadow down by the river ; it lay half under

the shadow of the pollard elms which bounded it on one side ; wreaths of blue smoke rose slowly through the calm air from two or three cottages which were almost hidden in the luxuriant foliage ; the swallows were skimming over the clear river, just dipping their wings for a moment and then darting on ; it was a lovely morning. Margaret dressed herself, and then knelt down by the open window to say her prayers. She did not forget in her petitions the aspirations which yesterday had deepened in her heart, and begged that God would show her how she might best serve Him. After her prayers were said she took her Testament, and reading a few verses, tried as she had been taught to fix her mind on them in meditation for a few minutes. And now, she began to ask herself, what was her work for the day ? The first thing that struck her, was that on Saturday her mother had given her a list for the grocer, begging her to copy it out in time to send to Exeter by her father on Monday morning. And so she began with this ; before it was done she heard the clock on the stairs strike half-past seven, and she thought she would go and look after her little sisters, and make sure that they were ready to go to church by eight o'clock. The vicar read prayers every morning at that hour, and the Lawrences, who lived close to the

church, were generally part of the congregation. In due course of time the children were ready, and the whole family went together to church. There were a few old people already in their places, and the children of the village school; many of the parishioners could not come, on account of their different callings, and others perhaps could but would not; in any case the offering of prayer and praise went up daily to Heaven.

As Margaret and her parents walked back, the vicar, Mr. Brand, overtook them, and after the usual greetings had been exchanged, begged Mrs. Lawrence to go and see his sister, in the course of the day, as he was obliged to be absent from home till evening, and she was laid up with a sprained ankle. The children who had run on before, came back with the letters which the postman had just brought.

“Is not this from Edward, mother?” asked Robert.

“When is he coming?” asked the two little ones.

“Wait a moment, my children, and let me see; yes, it is from Edward, he says he is coming back on Thursday, and that Uncle William is coming with him to spend a day or two with us.”

These tidings were received with universal

joy, and the whole party went into the house, where breakfast awaited them.

Breakfast at Lea Grange was not the long sociable meal it is in some houses, it was rather a matter of serious business, as Mr. Lawrence was obliged to start almost as soon as it could reasonably be finished, to catch the train at Oldbridge.

The children were at present enjoying their summer holidays, Miss Turner, their governess, having gone to spend a few weeks at home. We may hope that she enjoyed the rest as much as the children did, for it is very certain that she had worked much harder than they had done, to deserve it. When breakfast was over, and the cats and doves and Leo the great dog had been fed, and the morning reading gone through, there was a general petition that the afternoon might be spent at the sea-side. Sandycove was little more than two miles off, if you took all the short cuts across the fields, which could be done in fine weather.

"Can you come too, mother?" said Robert, "it is not very far after all; and you can rest for a while in the wood, half-way. It is such a beautiful day for the sea, and the tide will be full at two o'clock."

"Do come, dear mother, if it will not do you harm," begged Margaret. Mrs. Lawrence wil-

lingly consented to be of the party, and it was decided that they should start soon after an early dinner: as Mr. Lawrence was going to dine in Exeter there was no need to hurry back, and they could take the coolest part of the day.

“But first,” said Mrs. Lawrence, “I must go and see poor Miss Brand, who is laid up. Will you come with me, Margaret? and let us go soon.”

They were soon at the Vicarage, which was but a short way beyond the church. It was a low grey house with gables, overgrown with ivy and creepers.

Miss Brand was on a sofa in her pleasant drawing-room, which opened into the garden; she was busy at work, making some baby things.

“How glad I am to see you to-day! You see I am a prisoner, and my brother is away for the day, so I thought I should have spent it quite alone.”

“Your brother told me of your accident, dear Miss Brand, but tell me yourself, how you feel now,” said Mrs. Lawrence.

“Better, thank you, as long as I keep still. I am very busy with some things for poor Esther Crosse’s baby. Margaret, my dear, do help me; here is a thimble, and you will find

everything else in my basket. You see how that little shirt is to be made, don't you ? ”

Margaret was a ready workwoman, and took the employment offered to her, while Miss Brand went on to say,

“ You know John Crosse fell and broke his leg a couple of months ago, and now he is just getting about again ; but I fear most of their little savings are gone, and Esther could not get many things ready for the baby, so I am going to help her out with these.”

“ Let me take some away and finish them for you,” said Margaret. “ You have always so much to do.”

“ Thank you, my dear, I shall be very glad of your help, and I know you will be glad to do something for a good cause. There is so much to be done ! ”

“ But there are not many very poor people here, Miss Brand, are there ? ” said Margaret.

“ Not many *very* poor, but a great many who want a little done for them from time to time. However, I was thinking more of those in our great towns, where the need is so ceaseless and urgent. I have just had a letter from a friend who is working in London, begging me to send her some help, and I must try to begin and work for her.”

Mrs. Lawrence and Margaret soon bade Miss

Brand good-by, and returned home. The weather in the afternoon was all that could be desired ; the sky was clear, with only a few fleecy clouds to break its azure expanse, and there was a refreshing breeze. The party started prepared to enjoy themselves to the utmost. Their way lay first through one of those shady lanes so well known in Devonshire, a high ferny bank on each side, and trees meeting over head. Here and there a gate into an adjoining field gave a glimpse of the more distant country. Then there was a bit of heathy common to be crossed, and after that they dived into the refreshing gloom of a wood, and sat down to rest for a while under an old oak tree. The sun shining through the foliage threw a chequered shade on the fresh green grass and lighted up the rugged stems of the oaks and the smooth bark of the beech. How beautiful this world is ! I do not mean only where there are grand mountains, and glorious cascades, and rock-bound rivers,—but how beautiful it is everywhere ! It seems to me that all these fair sights that God has thrown in our common path, ought to fill our hearts with a deep feeling of the tenderness of His loving kindness, and care for His creatures. But our friends were soon rested, and so they proceeded on their way, still onward through the wood, and

out into an open lane, which soon led them to a little old-fashioned fishing hamlet, and then down to the sea.

Let us stand a moment before we take the last descent to the beach, and look at the scene. The sea is a beautiful blue ; the beach seems of almost a snowy white, and the cliffs rising from it are of deep red sandstone, topped with fresh green turf. In the distance on one side, is a long stretch of irregular cliff, gradually fading away till cliffs and sky can no longer be distinguished one from the other. On the other side you have nothing but the waste of waters, now calm and peaceful, with a few fishing-boats near, and some larger craft in the distance. Some boats are drawn up on the shore, and the fishermen are spreading out some nets to dry. The tide is going out, and the regularplash of the tiny waves is heard at intervals.

“ How glad I am to see the sea again ! ” said Robert. “ The last time I was here, was just at the end of the Christmas holidays. How grand the waves were then ! I wish there were a storm like that now ; but it is all as quiet as a lake.”

“ It is all the better for us though,” said Catharine, “ for we can go out on the rocks and look for some sea-anemones ; ” and off they went to the low rocks, made more visible by

each retreating wave, and discovered numberless little pools, inhabited by living flowers, and little crabs, and adorned with green and crimson sea-weeds.

“Here is such a lovely daisy !”

“I have found the most beautiful anemone !”

“Do look at this hermit crab !”

“Here is a blue-rayed limpet on a great stick of sea-weed !”

Such were the exclamations first of one, and then of another of the group, till at last they were tired of searching, and came to sit on the smooth beach above the range of the tide.

“I wish we lived quite close to the sea, as near as we are now, so that we could hear the waves all day and all night, don’t you, Lucy ?” said Catharine.

“I think I do, but I don’t know if I should like it in winter. I should be afraid in a great storm.”

“I should like to be in that ship, far away ; do you see it, mother ?” said Robert. “I mean that great barque, with the sun shining so brightly on her sails. Would you like that, mother ?”

“It would depend partly on where the ship was going, my dear, and also the people that were with me.”

“But if we were all in it, and papa, and we

could sail exactly where we liked, how nice that would be ! I should like to sail far away to the north, and see the icebergs ; and you, Margaret ? ”

“ I would sail to the Holy Land, and then on my way back, if I ever came back, I should like to go to Venice.”

“ And I would sail to Ireland, and see mamma’s old home,” said Lucy, “ and what would you do, Catharine ? ”

“ I would go to Ireland, and to the Holy Land, and then I would sail away to some place that nobody ever saw before.”

“ A desert island, Catharine, like Robinson Crusoe’s ? ”

“ No, not exactly that ; I think a great forest, some place that had never been touched by any body since God made it. I want to see how it would look. Would not you come, mother ? ”

“ Yes, my child, I understand that wish ; but the sea itself is just as God made it, when you get out of sight of the land with its houses and towns, and there is nothing but the water and the sky to be seen. I suppose it must be the same as it was after the Creation, when God said everything was very good.”

“ Is that a ruin on the cliff that runs out a little more into the sea than the others, far away to the left ? ” asked Robert.

“Yes, it is an old ruined chapel called St. Michael’s. I have heard that it was built some hundred years ago, and that the wives of the fishermen and sailors used to go up there on stormy nights to pray that their husbands might come back safe, and to keep a light burning that might guide them out at sea. It is a dangerous coast, and there are many families here, who have one of their number resting beneath the waves.”

“How glad I am that Edward and Robert are not sailors, mother; are not you?” said Margaret.

“Yes, my dear child, we should have many anxious hours if they were, and yet there is the same watchful care of God over us, by sea as by land. If we are His children, we are safe.”

They sat on the sea-shore till the sinking sun warned them that it was time to be turning their steps homewards, and then they went back through the wood and the dim bowery lane, now fragrant with the rich perfumes of the clematis and the woodbine, and did not reach their own door till the stars were already coming out in the dark-blue sky.

I have told you about one day, and you may imagine how a great many more were spent at Lea Grange. Sometimes Robert went to join some friends of his own age in a game of cricket,

or in long walks, and sometimes Mrs. Lawrence and the girls went to pay a few visits in the neighbourhood, but it was a very quiet life on the whole, with very few great events to fill the pages of a story. Margaret had an unfailing interest in the garden ; she loved her flowers, not as some people love them, who are content to walk round their beds and gather a choice bouquet, and then leave them to themselves, but she loved them in the spirit of a real gardener. There was always something to be done,—sowing seeds, planting roots or bulbs, making cuttings, bedding out, training and pruning,—and then what pleasure to see the reward of her labours, to watch the unfolding flowers of some new seedling, to admire some happy combination of rich colours in a border, and again to make plans for the next year, by which still more beautiful results are to be obtained. It is an employment full of *hope*, this gardening, and perhaps that is one reason why it takes so strong a hold in many of our hearts.

CHAPTER III.

BUT now I have an event to tell you of, and no small event in the eyes of the family at Lea Grange. It was the arrival of Edward and Uncle William. What preparations were made to receive them! and how many times Catharine and Lucy went down to the gate to look out for them, before they could possibly arrive!

At last they did arrive, with Mr. Lawrence, who had met them in Exeter. Edward had not been at home for some months, and Uncle William's visits were few and far between, for he was a clergyman, and very seldom left his parish. His visits were always welcome to every member of the family. He had the happy talent of adapting himself to every one, and drawing out the best of every one, and accordingly seldom found any one very dull and uninteresting. There was in him, though he had now passed middle age, a freshness of interest in everything worth caring for, and an unfailing love of learning, a cheerful, happy spirit, which always turned to the bright side of things, while

feeling deeply for all the troubles of others, and earnestly fighting against the sin and evil of this world. The evening passed in talk such as is heard between those who are near and dear to each other, but seldom meet: talk of old times and future hopes, of sorrows and joys, of the absent who may yet be seen again in this world, and of the absent who have passed beyond its limits, till the usual hour of retiring to rest slipped by unawares. Next morning how many things there were to be shown to the new-comers,—the young pigeons, the seedling carnations, the croquet ground, and the new balls and mallets, Margaret's drawings, the slippers that Catharine and Lucy were working for papa's birthday, "for a surprise," they said; but there was some reason to fear that the secret might be divulged before the right moment should arrive. By-and-by, Uncle William said he must go and call on an old friend in the neighbourhood. Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence went with him. Margaret took her work, and seated herself in the arbour in the garden, the things for Esther's baby were not quite finished, and she wished to delay no longer about them. Presently her two little sisters came begging her to join them in a game of croquet. She told them she was too busy, and that they must do without her.

"But you know," said Catharine, "Robert is going to play with us, and three will not do for the game. You were not too busy to amuse yourself all the morning."

Catharine was evidently put out by her disappointment; and it is hard to say how the matter would have ended but for Edward's timely arrival. He was easily induced to join the game, and Margaret was left to her reflections. She could not help thinking of Catharine's words; though they had been said in a moment of irritation. It was perfectly true that she had been amusing herself all the morning. Perhaps she had been wrong, perhaps she ought to have done the work first, and then she would have been ready to join the children's game, and Catharine's temper would not have been tried. She worked on; and before her task was quite finished, Edward stood beside her.

"Come and sit here, Edward, till I have done my work, and then let me help you to settle your books."

He sat down beside her, and they began to talk. Margaret drew from him, little by little, some account of his work, and of his hopes for the future. He had distinguished himself in college, and now in a few months the time would come when he might hope to be ordained.

“I could almost envy you,” said Margaret, “you have been learning so much, and then you have distinguished yourself; and by-and-by, when you are a clergyman, you will be able to do so much good.”

“But the responsibilities are very great,” said he, “and I know I am but little fit to take them on me. I do not mean in the way of learning only, that is such a small part of it; but a clergyman ought to be so holy, and so wise, so like his Master, in fact. Promise me, Margaret, that you will pray for me every day, that God will give me His special grace to prepare me.”

“I will, dear Edward. But, indeed, I am sure you will succeed.”

And then Edward asked her for many particulars of home life. “You know I am delighted to get your letters, and I must say you are all very good correspondents. But talking is much fuller and better. How has mother been the last few months?”

“I think she is really a good deal stronger,” said Margaret. “She has not had a headache for a long time, and she is able to walk with us much more than she did.”

“I daresay she is very glad that you have done with the school-room now, you will be able to do so much for her. By-the-by, you never

told me how you like the change, and what you are going to do with yourself next."

"I like it, on the whole, very much. You know I do not want to give up learning, but I am glad to be able to do it in a different way, and I should like very much to do some good to my neighbours. I don't well know how to set about it, though."

"I thought that was some work for the poor you were doing just now, was it not?" said Edward.

"Yes it was, some that Miss Brand gave me. But that is such a little thing; any one can do a bit of work."

"Why, Margaret, are you so very ambitious as to want to do something not like anybody else?"

"It is not exactly that. But don't you know that a girl who has never been taught half the things we have, can do this kind of work quite as well. Surely a person who is educated ought to be able to do something higher. If I could even teach, but there are enough teachers already for the school here."

"I think, Margaret, you need not be dissatisfied if you can follow Dorcas' line, for the present. Perhaps something else may come in your way by-and-by. I suppose the best plan, if mother approves, would be for you to ask

Mr. Brand if he can give you anything to do. I fancy there must be some poor people who would be glad to hear a little reading now and then. Then there are always Catharine and Lucy, you could do a great deal for them. How is Catharine getting on?"

"Since the holidays began, smoothly enough; but before there were continual fusses with Miss Turner over the lessons, and I suppose it will be much the same when she comes back again."

"That is a great pity," said Edward, "there is so much good in Catharine all the while. Do you remember last year, when John Marshall's house was burnt down, how she brought all her little store of pocket-money to Mr. Brand, for the poor creatures! And it was done so quietly, too, nobody would ever have known it, if Mr. Brand had not told mother."

"Yes, Catharine would do a generous thing like that any day, but she cannot govern her temper."

"I suppose it is the most difficult thing anyone can attempt," said Edward. "I mean, of course, if the temper is bad. Lucy's never seems to want much trouble. You could do much for Catharine, Margaret, by trying to shield her from every provocation."

"But would that be good for her? Must she not learn to bear what is trying?"

“No doubt she must, Margaret. But there will always be enough trials; besides, we are so warned against causing others to offend, that I suppose we can hardly be too careful to remove anything we possibly can that may lead another to sin. But your work is done now; shall we come and take it to Miss Brand?”

The brother and sister set out on their walk; but as they passed Robert Smerdon’s cottage, their progress was arrested by his granddaughter Mary, who told them that the old man was very weak, and had sent her to beg that Mr. Brand would come and see him. She was hurrying to the Vicarage; and in the meantime Edward and Margaret went into the cottage. They found Robert in his easy chair by the fire, for he was chilly, though the weather was fine. He seemed free from pain, but extremely feeble, and was hardly able to speak to them. Edward thought a little wine would do him good, and Margaret went home for it. She soon returned, and when he had tasted it, he revived a little, and thanked them. Edward told him he would stay, and see if he wanted anything till Mary’s return, but begged Robert to keep quiet, and not tire himself by speaking before Mr. Brand’s visit.

“Thank you kindly, Master Edward,” said the old man. “I think I am not long for this

world, and I want to be ready when my hour comes. But I am not cowed at death, for I trust in God."

Margaret left the cottage, and went to wait for her brother in the garden. The words of the old man had struck her: "not cowed at death." She tried to fancy what it would be to be so near it, as he seemed to be; but it is hard for youth and health to do this. Till we have ourselves stood, as it were, on the brink of that dark river, we cannot form an idea of what it is; but we can look back and realise, in some degree, how our past lives would strike us on a death-bed. How trivial and unimportant many of our interests and pastimes, and even of our labours here seem, in the intense earnestness of such a light. How we long to have done something worth the doing before our earthly course is over! We cannot bear the thought of sinking down like a stone cast into the still waters, leaving a trace for a few short moments, and then hidden and lost, as if it had never been. And if we think more deeply of our life, that it is the time in which we can do something for Him who has done all for us, in which we can deny ourselves, and show our love by some sacrifice of self, what an increased value does it assume, and what a motive is given for every power.

Mr. Brand came up to the garden-gate, and Margaret opened it for him. He went into the cottage, and Edward came out almost immediately. It was now too late for the walk to Miss Brand's, and they returned thoughtfully to their home.

"Do you think Robert will die very soon?" asked Margaret.

"I do not know; he seems very weak, but I do not think there is any disease. It is rather the gradual going out of the lamp. He has reached fourscore years, and at that age of course one cannot expect him to rally."

"Could we do anything for him, I wonder?"

"Mary seems very attentive, and he told me that Mrs. Ward had been with him last night. His daughter, who is in service, will come for a few days to-morrow, and that will probably be enough. But we will go every day, and see how he is. We must pray for him. I do not mean that, as far as we can judge, he is unprepared for death; but it is a time when every human being must need all the strength and help he can have."

Uncle William's visit came to an end very soon, far too soon for the wishes of his relatives. But though they were sorry to lose him, every one seemed refreshed and strengthened by his influence.

His sister, Mrs. Lawrence, had talked much with him on that subject most engrossing to a mother's heart — the future of her children. Margaret, his god-child, had opened her heart more to him than she could have done to any one save, perhaps, her mother, and was strengthened in her aspirations for a life of usefulness, while at the same time she was led to look at the little every-day duties lying in her path, which we are so apt to neglect, while we dream of doing good on a larger scale. Robert seemed to have been impressed in some mysterious manner with a desire to improve himself, and begged Margaret to help him with his French during the holidays. Catharine was heard to say that if Uncle William were always here, she would never get into a bad temper; while Lucy managed for several days to avoid teasing her sister. It is a blessed thing, this influence, which some people exercise for good on all with whom they come into contact. What does it consist in? Is it not, if we could analyse it, in charity, and a single eye to the glory of God?

A few more days passed on. Margaret was returning with her father from spending the day with some friends a few miles off, and they went to Robert Smerdon's cottage to ask for news of the old man.

“He is gone, sir,” said his daughter, who had

come to nurse him. "This afternoon he passed away quite quietly. Mr. Brand was here yesterday, and gave him the Holy Communion. He spoke very little after that; but he bid us put our trust in God, and he repeated several times, 'Ye are bought with a price.' He took great comfort in that thought, for he said God would be sure to keep what He had bought so dear. Will you come in, and see him, sir? He was very grateful for your kindness, and all the family's."

Mr. Lawrence turned to his daughter, and asked her, in a low voice, if she could come in. He did not like to refuse. Margaret had never looked on death; and it was not without some shrinking that she said she would go, for the first sight of death must always be very awful. The woman opened the door of the little bed-chamber behind the kitchen, and Margaret followed her father into the room. The old man's face was perfectly placid. The worn and suffering look that it had had for some time was gone, and there was an expression of beauty and dignity which death sometimes gives. He looked younger than before, and there was a smile on the lips. Still Margaret felt the awful presence of death, and there was a shrinking at her heart. She could not take her eyes off the face of the corpse while they stood in the room.

But it was a kind of relief to her feelings when her father turned away, and, after a few sympathising words to the mourners, left the cottage. They walked on in silence till they were opposite the church, and their eyes fell on the western heaven, lighted up with a glorious crimson sunset.

“Look, Margaret,” said her father. “It seems an emblem of our old friend’s peaceful departure. Rest and light at the last. I had known him ever since we came to live here, and I do not think I ever saw one who gave me the idea of setting God before him in everything more than he did. I hope the sight of death did not distress you much, my child. It is well to be able to bear it.”

“I am glad I saw him, papa. But it was very strange, and almost more awful than I could have thought.”

“Yes, Margaret, it must be so—it must always be awful. But here there is peace and hope. I think the sight of death enables one the better to understand the mercy of our Blessed Lord, who ‘humbled Himself even unto death’ for us. When we think of His Sacred Body having lain cold and lifeless like that, we can in some better degree realise the love which brought Him so low.”

CHAPTER IV.

TIME went on quietly. Margaret spent some hours every morning in study and drawing, she worked for the poor, helped her mother in many little household duties, walked with her father or brothers, and helped the children in their games and work. Her purpose of usefulness was continually before her, and she began to find, as perhaps we generally may do, work very near her hand, little things so small that if her attention had not been especially called to them, she would have passed them unheeded, but little things that had to be done, that were for the good of her neighbour, and for the glory of God. She was learning—it is by these little things we do learn—charity and watchfulness. One day was much like another, we often say so, and we get tired of this uniformity, yet each is really new, unlike all others bringing fresh graces, fresh opportunities, fresh teachings, it may be fresh trials, leaving us, not as it found us, but changed, going forwards or back-

wards in our course. We may not ourselves always know which, but the fact is there. Margaret was learning—learning amongst other things that she had a great work to do in her own heart ; that it was for the glory of God that she should be holy, and that her, most unceasing and earnest efforts were needed to attain holiness,—to approach it in any degree. She had faults to contend with, and as the work went on, she saw more and more how much there was still to do, before she could even reach her own imperfect standard.

The holidays were drawing to a close, and Miss Turner was to come back soon, when one day Mrs. Lawrence received a letter from her, saying that her mother had been taken suddenly ill, in a very dangerous manner, and that it was quite impossible for her to leave her, as the only daughter at home was a mere child. The doctors thought the illness likely to be so tedious, that Miss Turner said she had no choice but to give up her situation at once, and devote herself to the care of her mother. She hoped the inconvenience to Mrs. Lawrence would not be great. This letter was read one morning after breakfast. Robert was back at school, the two little girls had gone to feed their pets, but Margaret and Edward had lingered, looking for a book on the shelves

which stood in the dining-room. Mrs. Lawrence read the letter aloud.

“I am very sorry for Miss Turner’s trouble,” she said; “but perhaps as the break has come, it may be a good opportunity for making a change.”

“We must look out for another governess,” said Mr. Lawrence.

“I did not mean that, dear Henry; I thought of teaching the children myself. I have often wished to do it, and now that I am so much stronger than I was, it will be a good time to begin.”

“I am afraid of your doing too much,” said Mr. Lawrence; “but Margaret could help you for a while, and then you will see how the plan works.”

“Do let me help, mother,” said Margaret; “I think I could teach them some things.”

After some further consultation, the plans were settled. Margaret and her mother divided the labours of the school-room between them; occasional help was to be given by masters at Exeter.

Mrs. Lawrence had many reasons for being pleased to make a change. The expense of a governess was a serious matter, now that one son was at school, and the other in college, and though Miss Turner was in many ways most

excellent, Mrs. Lawrence thought that Catharine's temper was sometimes unnecessarily tried, and that the very fact of a fresh start, might be very beneficial to her. Here was a work for Margaret, though not exactly the one she would have chosen for herself ; her visions of usefulness were chiefly amongst the poor and ignorant, however, she was learning to take the work given her.

Catharine and Lucy themselves looked forward to the new system, with some satisfaction ; they thought it would be very nice to have their mother to teach them, and they were rather curious to see how Margaret would acquit herself in a new capacity ; mixed with these feelings there was in Lucy's mind a sorrow at losing Miss Turner, and in Catharine's a kind of remorse, for she felt she had often given her a great deal of needless trouble by her insubordination and temper. For the first few days all went on very smoothly. Mrs. Lawrence was in the schoolroom as much as possible. The children were intelligent and quick in learning, and the novelty was rather pleasing to both parties ; but by-and-by Catharine's temper began to show itself, and Lucy was from time to time idle and careless ; she was however one of those happy children who are generally on good terms with their nurses and

teachers ; there was something so engaging about her, that her faults were lightly passed over, and when things came to the worst, a flood of tears, and many promises of amendment would settle the whole matter. Margaret had, what is a common fault with earnest natures, a great strictness and severity in her ideas ; to do her justice, it must be said that she was as strict in her judgment of self, as in that of others, but there was a want of tenderness and forbearance, of care to avoid offence, an insisting on trifles, that often caused strife ; she had not yet learnt that wise and Christian maxim, “pas trop gouverner.” She had no love of ruling, and so far might have been fitted for the post, but her strictness about trifles, her want of a ready power of putting herself in the place of others, often caused disputes and outbreaks of temper on Catharine’s part. She felt that teaching was by no means the easy work that she had imagined, that the mere knowledge of certain subjects, was a very small portion of the qualifications of a good teacher, and from time to time she was much out of heart about it. One day everything seemed to have gone wrong, Catharine had evidently as the saying goes, “got up with her wrong foot foremost ;” it was perhaps partly the weather, for a walk to Coleman’s wood had been planned, and since

dawn the rain had poured in ceaseless torrents. It was much wanted for the country, but that was very poor consolation to the little girls ; they came to their work late, then Lucy's French dictation was full of the faults that Margaret had been correcting for a week before. Catharine's sums were in a state of hopeless perplexity, the slate was brought up to Margaret over and over again, with a different result each time, and each time wrong. Catharine got fairly stupefied over them, though they were really quite within her powers ; at last Margaret said to her,

“Catharine, this is very wrong, you are not trying, for those sums are not any harder than what you did a week ago, quite rightly.”

“That is not true Margaret, I never had such hard sums in my life ; even Miss Turner never asked me to do anything so difficult. I don't think I shall try any more, if they are not right this time.”

“Then you will do very wrong, Catharine, and mother will be much displeased. She is busy now writing letters to India, and if you cared to save her trouble you would do your lessons well, and let her find them finished when she comes back.”

“I care for mother as much and more than

you do, Margaret, and it is all your fault for giving me sums I can't do."

At this moment Margaret's mother came into the room, and on asking how the lessons were getting on, heard a complaint of Catharine. She took the slate and looked at the sums, and then said, "I fear Catharine, you have been thinking of other things, for you have done sums of this kind quite rightly before. We must put them by for to-morrow, and then I hope to see them well done, but for to-day you have no mark for arithmetic. And now it is late, and I am sure Margaret must be tired of work, so you and Lucy may go and play battle-dore in the lobby."

The little girls put away their books, and left the room. Margaret sat down to write an enclosure for the Indian letter to her cousin, but the writing would not get on that morning, and Margaret sat with the pen in her hand, and with a troubled expression on her face. Her mother soon noticed it, and said,

"Dear Margaret, I am afraid you have undertaken a more difficult task than you expected."

"It is not that I mind, mother. I would gladly work twice as hard, but I do not succeed. Catharine's temper is getting as troublesome as ever, and though Lucy is very pleasant

generally, I am afraid she is learning very little. I cannot help you as I thought I could."

"Do not be out of heart, Margaret, perhaps more good is done than you see ; we often have to wait a long time for results, and teaching is to most people not a thing that comes of itself, but one that must be learned. Perhaps you expect too much from the little ones. You take great pains I am sure, but I think sometimes you do not pass over little things, and that this irritates Catharine's temper. It is a great art in dealing with children to know when to overlook faults. Of course I do not now speak of really serious faults, but of the many little things which are almost certain, in a child who is carefully brought up, to cure themselves, and of others which are of so much less importance than temper. With Catharine particularly, I would try never to find fault if possibly it could be avoided, and to praise whenever it can be done. She has with many good points a trying temper, and if yielding to it once becomes a fixed habit, it will give untold trouble to herself and others. Lucy is very different, I do not mean that she is really *better* than Catharine, but her faults are at present of a kind less unpleasant to her neighbours. She wants however to learn to think, she is too apt to be carried away by the feeling of the moment, and

there is I fear a tendency to vanity, which will be a snare to her, and another thing that grieves me is, her love of teasing Catharine ; we must try to check this, and make her feel that she is really breaking the golden rule when she gives way to it. They are both pretty quick in learning, which is a great comfort ; but you know, Margaret, this is only an experiment we are making, and if we find it is too hard work for you, we must make some other plan."

"No, dear mother, you must let me go on, I will do my best, and I hope by degrees I shall manage better."

Margaret was helped by her mother's words, and made many good resolutions of forbearance and gentleness, in short, of doing as she would be done by, a rule which is often put aside in our dealings with those over whom we are placed in any manner. By-and-by Catharine came back and whispered to her that she was sorry she had been so long about her sums, "but really," she added, "I was thinking so much about our disappointment in not going to the wood, that I could not remember what to carry, and then I got so puzzled." Margaret kissed her, and all was right again.

The teaching went on, and on the whole it prospered. There were some days when things went wrong, and probably there were faults on

both sides, but by degrees Catharine's outbreaks of temper became far less frequent, and Margaret exercised a very good influence over both her sisters.

Mr. Brand had asked her to go sometimes and see a few of the poor of his parish, to whom he thought her visits might be a comfort. Margaret began to feel that she was of some use in the world ; she was learning more than she thought, both from her sisters and from the poor ; and truly we might always learn from the circumstances with which we are surrounded, for has not God ordered them all for us, with a view to our endless welfare ?

But Margaret had "come out," and you will no doubt suppose that this step made some difference in her life ; her parents lived very quietly, but for that very reason any little change from the daily routine was an event in Margaret's life. Soon after the holidays were over, an invitation to dinner, for Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Lawrence, came from Mr. and Mrs. Taylor of Cliff Manor.

Cliff Manor was an old house which had long been in possession of the family of Mrs. Taylor, but had been for some years deserted. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor had come to live there when, on the death of her father some months before, the place came into her hands ; hitherto on account

of their deep mourning, they had mixed very little in the society of the neighbourhood, and much interest was now caused by their appearance in the little world of Oldbridge. The invitation was accepted ; it was Margaret's first dinner-party, and she looked forward to it with some satisfaction. Catharine and Lucy thought her lot a most enviable one ; and counted the years that must pass before they could hope for a similar one.

The expected evening came. Margaret dressed herself in white with blue ribbons. I have never told you what she was like, and now it would seem to be time to say something about the matter. I have heard it remarked that every one is good-looking at some time or other, and I hope it may be true. Margaret was good-looking now : she was fair, with a quantity of light brown hair, blue eyes, and a pleasant and thoughtful countenance. You would not have remarked her as beautiful, but her face was one that would have grown upon you, as you came to know her better. The little girls took the only part left for them in the proceedings of the evening, that of waiting-women at the toilets of their mother and sister. Lucy's tasteful fingers provided for her mother a bouquet of China-asters, and for Margaret one of late roses, and in due time the preparations

were completed. Margaret came to her mother's room, to be assured that all was right on so important an occasion, and presently Mr. Lawrence's voice was heard announcing that the fly was at the door, and that it was time to start. The western sun was gilding the tops of the trees, and casting long shadows on the ground, as they set out. It was a drive of about two miles to Cliff Manor, which stood a little way back from the sea, on the summit of one of the red sand-stone cliffs which were seen from Sandycove. It was a long, low, gray building, old and strong ; it had weathered many a storm, and more than once had served as a refuge for shipwrecked mariners ; in wild weather the sound of the breakers on the rocky shore was very clearly heard there, and when a strong south-westerly gale was blowing, the front windows were often dimmed with the salt spray. Some people would have called it a dreary place, and yet it had a beauty and charm of its own. For many generations the Martins had lived in it, and loved it, till some five-and-twenty years ago Mrs. Taylor's brother, George Martin, then a promising youth, had been drowned almost in sight of the windows. He had been out in a small sailing-boat when a sudden squall came on ; the boat capsized, and all on board perished. His poor mother had never been

able from that time to bear the sight of the sea, and the family went to live in another part of England ; both the poor boy's parents were now dead, and Mrs. Taylor was his eldest sister. Margaret had often heard this sad story, and the place had a special kind of interest in her eyes. The old gray walls and deep-mullioned windows carried her back to the past, and what a charm there is in anything that carries us back ? Would it be the same if any magic power could make us see things as they will be in two or three hundred years to come ? I think not, for there is an instinct in the heart that craves for the "old times," the "old paths."

The company assembled in a large hall, hung round with many old family pictures, of ladies in hoops, gentlemen in court dresses, and children with their hair cut straight across the forehead. Margaret was studying them, wondering if by any change of dress they could be made like the people around her, when she became aware that her host was speaking to her, and introducing to her his cousin, Mr. Charles Martin, who was to take her in to dinner. The party was not large, a few guests were staying in the house, and the others were near neighbours. At dinner, Margaret found herself placed between Mr. Martin, and her old friend Mr. Brand. The former had been a great

traveller, and she was soon engrossed in his stories of foreign parts ; by-and-by her attention was caught by the conversation passing on her other side between Mr. Brand and the lady beyond him ; she was a stranger to Margaret, and they were speaking of books. The lady seemed to be given to studies, and spoke with a clearness and beauty of language not often to be met with. She had evidently a great interest also in the neighbourhood, and asked Mr. Brand many questions as to the old history of the country. The dinner passed pleasantly, and by-and-by the ladies withdrew to a drawing-room beyond the hall. Later in the evening there was some good music. Margaret was not herself a musician, but had a power of enjoying it, and there was something in the whole scene, the old tapestry hangings, the pictures, the rare china, the numerous objects of *virtu* disposed about the room, the exotic flowers with their rich perfume, the profusion of lights and the bright dresses of the ladies, that seemed to carry her into another world. Margaret was falling into a kind of reverie, when Miss Gilbert, one of the guests staying at Cliff Manor, came to talk to her.

“ Have you been in London lately, Miss Lawrence ? ” “ Were you at the Plymouth regatta ? ” “ Are you going to the archery

meeting at Bitton?" "Have you a croquet club in this neighbourhood?" "Don't you find it dreadfully dull in the winter?" were amongst the questions asked her by this lady, to which Margaret was obliged to reply in the negative. She began to feel bewildered, and moreover she had, (shall we confess it?) an uncomfortable feeling in her own mind that with every fresh "no" she sank a little in the esteem of her interrogator. She almost felt ashamed of herself for being so behind-hand; was there really a world beyond, just beyond her, from which she was shut out? The lady, insensible to Margaret's feelings, rattled on, told her of all the changes she should make at Cliff Manor if it were in her power, how she would have the wainscoat removed because it was so gloomy and old-fashioned, how she would turn the old tennis-court into a croquet ground, and cut down the yew hedge in the garden because it looked so melancholy. Margaret felt inwardly rejoiced that the projector of all these schemes had it not in her power to do more than talk of them, and was relieved when Mr. Martin, her companion at dinner, came to show her his portfolio of foreign photographs. What a treat they were to her, those views taken beneath clear bright skies, of scenes so full of history and of beauty. Rome,

Venice, Egypt, the Holy Land all passed before her eyes, and the intelligent remarks and explanations of the collector gave a reality to them all. At last it was time for the party to break up, one by one the carriages drove away, through the lanes lighted by glowworms, beneath the starry sky.

“How did you like your first dinner-party, Margaret?” asked her mother, as they passed out into the road.

“Oh, very much, dear mother, everything was so beautiful, so like a picture. I should like to know all that has happened in that old house, and all the histories of those portraits in the hall.”

“More than any one can tell us, Margaret; but the story would be a strange one if it could be known. I have heard that in the time of the Crusades, there was a lady living there, waiting her husband’s return from the Holy Land, but he was taken prisoner and detained a long time, and at last worn out with waiting, his wife died, and he returned home just in time to bury her in the little church you may have seen from the window of the Hall.”

“There was a curious story too,” said Mr. Lawrence, “of a Spanish lady of rank, who was wrecked here, and having been saved by the master of Cliff Manor, eventually married his

son ; they say she gave a beautiful organ to the church as a thank-offering for her deliverance. I believe the tomb of Antonia is still to be seen in the church, but I have not been there since Mrs. Taylor's father and mother left the country. They were a great loss, and I hope the present possessors will in some degree fill their place."

Next morning Margaret was expected to give a full, true, and particular account of the party to her little sisters. Lucy wished to know what everybody had on, and Catharine required an equally detailed account of the pictures and tapestries. At last they were satisfied, and concluded with a hope that Margaret would go to a great many parties till they were old enough to go themselves, because it was so amusing to hear about them all. But Margaret's gaieties were few and far between. The intercourse with Cliff Manor was kept up pretty frequently, and by degrees she found great pleasure in the society of the lady who had been talking to Mr. Brand at dinner. This lady was a great deal older than Margaret ; she was a relative of Mr. Taylor's, and was paying a long visit to him and his wife ; she was a person who had known much sorrow and loneliness on her way through life, and Margaret's earnestness and simplicity were refreshing to

her, though she was far Margaret's superior in acquirements of various kinds. Margaret in her turn admired and loved her, and was often helped by her in her studies and plans, for Mrs. Dorner had a ready sympathy with all the interests and pursuits of others. Occasionally Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence went to spend a day at Exeter, where they had many friends, and once in the course of the summer Margaret went for a few days to some cousins in the neighbourhood of Torquay ; perhaps the even tenor of her ordinary life, made her enjoy these recreations all the more, while they in their turn sent her back to her common round of duties with fresh energy.

CHAPTER V.

ONE morning the post brought a foreign letter for Mrs. Lawrence while the family were assembled at the breakfast-table. She opened it, and glanced hastily at the contents, and then said, "Here is a letter from Jane at last! Let me give you your second cup of tea, Henry, and then I will read it aloud." Jane was Mr. Lawrence's younger sister, and was a great favourite with all her family. We will listen with them to the letter which Mrs. Lawrence is about to read.

"Cauterets, Hautes Pyrénées, July 24.

"**M**Y DEAREST ISABEL,—I hope you have had the letter which I wrote just before leaving Pau, otherwise I fear you may be uneasy about us. I have been waiting to write again from day to day, in the hopes of telling you something decided of our plans, but I can say nothing as yet. This wet day, however, is so fit for letter-writing, that I will lose no more time in making a beginning. In the first place,

I am thankful to say I can give you a very good account of our dear Amy. She bore the journey here without over-fatigue, and is now working away at her course of water-drinking and baths, which I trust is doing her a great deal of good. And now I must take up the thread of our history from my last letter. We were almost the last of the British in leaving Pau. Day after day we had seen our friends and acquaintances depart. The streets became deserted, and the carpets were all taken out to the Haute Plante to be cleaned. Carpet-cleaning and dust encroached little by little on the part we had deemed devoted to walkers. We waited, however, in the hope of making sure of warm weather at Cauterets, and also of having a little rain to lay the dust for our journey there. At last, on the afternoon of the 28th of June, we set off for Argelez. The drive was pleasant enough. The first few miles we knew well, along the straight road, with its line of poplars on each side. There is something dispiriting and almost hopeless in these roads—so straight and uniform. They remind me of the old pictures of the Path to Paradise; but, alas! the goal seems very distant. However, by-and-by we turned aside, and our course lay through pretty villages, with farm-houses standing in large courts, entered by gates like our

lich-gates in England, and every here and there a delicious shady grove of chestnuts, with a little stream, where women were washing their clothes. The chestnuts now in flower are very beautiful; the flower is so much larger than at home. At a distance it gives a bright colour in the landscape. It was growing dusk when we reached Lourdes, and the people at the hotel where we stopped to bait the horses seemed anxious to persuade us that a storm was coming, and that we could not possibly go on further that night. However, we determined to proceed, and in course of time reached Argelez by the light of the glowworms. It was very pleasant to rest in the clean and comfortable Hotel de France. After I had been, I thought, a long time asleep, I was roused while it was still quite dark, by the tinkling of sheep-bells, and the wild song of some shepherds, who were taking their flocks up to the mountains for pasture. There was something very sweet and strange in that song breaking in on the silence of the night. In the morning we wandered about the pretty old town, admiring the carved wooden balconies of many of the houses, and the lovely views (as the mist of the mountains cleared off). We found some acquaintances established in a château at one end of Argelez, a curious old château where the Black Prince is said to have

lodged. It stands in a charming garden, gay with the scarlet blossom of the pomegranate, and the view from the terrace is worth going a long way to see. We set off again about one o'clock, and reached Cauterets in less than two hours, driving into the mist, which so continually hangs on these high mountains. We soon found a clean and comfortable little apartment, and are much pleased with it and with our landlady. But how we shivered the first two days. We had a chaufferette for our feet, and ultimately lighted a fire one evening. Cauterets is, you know, very high up in the mountains. The little town lies in a sort of nest, in a narrow gorge. There are still great patches of snow on some of the mountains, which do not seem very distant from us. What it must be in winter, I can hardly fancy. Very few of the inhabitants, however, remain here. At last the weather has grown bright and warm, and we are able to enjoy ourselves out of doors. We begin the day by going up to the Raillièrè, a spring of sulphur water, which is considered very good, especially for chest complaints. Amy drinks and bathes here. We go up in an omnibus, in which human nature is to be seen in some of its least lovely forms. Every one tries to get next the door to get a little air. Then there are people who won't have their windows

opened, and others who won't have them shut. In short, 'Every one for himself,' is the motto. I mean to take a donkey instead, in self-defence, as I have to go and drink at a spring a little higher than the Raillière. After a late breakfast and a rest we go and sit in the park, till it is time for Amy to go again to her spring for a second draught of this wonderful water. There are a great many people here, and we are fortunate in having some friends. We often amuse ourselves by watching the picturesque figures of some of the visitors. There are some monks,—Benedictines, I believe,—all clothed in white; some Spaniards, with their gay red sashes and handkerchiefs round their heads instead of hats; some sisters of charity, with their white caps, who must enjoy a breath of country air and a little rest after their hard labours; and amongst them all a number of gay ladies in the latest Paris fashions, and the most brilliant colours. And now I must end for to-day, as the weather has cleared, and it is time to go out."

"*July 26th.*—Good news for you, my dear brother and sister. We may hope to be with you not very long after you receive this. We have just seen the doctor, and he thinks Amy is equal to the journey, and will be all the better for going home, so we propose (D.V.) to set out to-morrow for Tarbes, and then to make

our way northwards by degrees. I cannot yet say when we may reach England; but I will write again on our way, and I trust it may not be more than a week or ten days before we meet. If it still suits you, we will go to you, as you have so often urged us to do, as soon as possible after landing; but you had better write to me in Paris, where we mean to stay a day. I cannot tell you how I rejoice in the thoughts of seeing you all again, and of being at home once more. I have had such a longing for you all, and for the very trees, and flowers, and birds. But I must end, and make preparations for our departure. With our united love to you all,

“Ever, my dear Isabel’s affectionate sister,
“JANE LAWRENCE.”

The joy of all the party at hearing this news was very great, and preparations were at once begun for the reception of the expected guests. Amy was Mr. Lawrence’s youngest sister. She had married very young, and gone out to India with her husband, but had been obliged from bad health to return to England, and then to spend the winter abroad. Margaret had not seen her since she was quite a child; but “Aunt Jane” was frequently at Lea Grange, and was much loved by all its inmates. At last a letter

came, announcing their arrival in England, and saying that they hoped to be at Lea Grange on the following evening. How often did Margaret's mother go round the rooms prepared for the guests, to see if anything more could be thought of for their comfort, especially for that of the invalid. An easy couch was placed in the window, that she might rest herself, and look out at the same time on the garden and the green meadows beyond. A vase of the choicest flowers stood on the table, and everything looked bright and fresh. It was growing late when the travellers arrived; but Amy declared she was quite able to come down to tea, and would not hear of staying in her room for the rest of the evening. Margaret remembered her in a dim way, as a beautiful young lady when she was quite a child, and at first she seemed to her, and indeed to Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence very little changed. There was the same bright but delicate colour, the beautiful dark hair and brilliant eyes, the same ready wit, and a charm of manner that seldom failed to attract at first sight. The travellers had come home laden with treasures, and even that first evening some of them were displayed. There were sketches of the grand mountains where they had lately sojourned, and of the picturesque inhabitants, of old châteaus and churches, many

of them connected with some thrilling legend or curious history. There were seeds and roots of rare plants, which might perhaps be induced to flower under other skies. There were Spanish handkerchiefs and knives, and many specimens of the delicate Pyrenean knitting in the shape of shawls, and scarfs, and slippers. Every one had some present, selected with a view to his or her particular needs or tastes, and every one was happy. All anxiety on Amy's account was much allayed by her good looks and high spirits. The plan was that the sisters should make Lea Grange their home, or at least their head-quarters for the rest of the summer, till the return of Amy's husband, Mr. Franklyn, from India, when she was to join him, and Jane to go back to her home in the north of England. It was a bright warm summer. There were many of those delicious days when existence itself is a pleasure. Often the whole party used to sit under the shade of an old larch, the ladies working while Mr. Lawrence read to them.

But this state of things was too good to last. Chilly days came, with rain and wind, depressing the invalid's spirits, and keeping her a prisoner in the house, while even those who were well were glad to gather round the fire in the evenings. Jane was obliged to go away for

a few days ; and, to make matters worse, there were no letters from India by one mail. All these untoward events, put together, had an unfavourable effect on poor Amy's health and spirits. She became restless and irritable, longing for change, complaining bitterly of the climate, while she refused to take the precautions necessary in her state of health. Margaret had from the first devoted herself a good deal to her aunt, and had been pleased to feel that she was of some use to her. She used to bring her up her breakfast in the morning, whenever she did not feel equal to joining the circle downstairs ; to walk with her up and down the sheltered garden walk when the weather did not permit her to go further ; to read aloud to her whenever she was inclined, and to perform the many other little offices in which affection finds such pleasure. But now all was changed. The breakfast did not please Amy, and the book wearied her. Everything that Margaret did seemed a failure. Poor Margaret was much grieved,—she loved her aunt dearly. She would gladly have toiled day and night to make her happier and better, but it seemed hopeless work. She blamed herself, and yet she could not find how to amend. She had seen people ill before, but it had always been something of a more definite kind, and she did not understand (how could

she?; the weariness of long-continued weakness, and the keen sensitiveness of every nerve—all the suffering that can hardly be described; and, if it were described, hardly understood, except by such as have learned to sympathise by undergoing the same. Perhaps Amy was unreasonable sometimes. If people are not a little selfish and exigeant when they have been long laid aside from ordinary life, it must be from a very special grace. Perhaps she did not think of many little things which might have saved those who loved her some of their anxiety and pain; but it was hard for her. She had been always so tenderly cherished, first at her own home, and then by her husband, that she had learned to look on such care as a sort of natural right.

While Jane was away she became very poorly, and was obliged to stay in bed for some days. Margaret and her mother shared the nursing, and sat up alternately for the few nights that the invalid wished to have some one with her. It was not necessary, but she had a nervous dread of being left alone. What an anxious night it was to Margaret the first that she sat up! Her aunt was continually asking for something, and as often dissatisfied when it was given. At last she fell asleep, and Margaret sat in the easy chair, hardly venturing to

move for fear she should rouse her. She had a book beside her, but she was afraid to turn its pages, so she could only sit and think. It was the morning of her birthday—a time when we are naturally led to look back and to look forward. She looked back, and she felt as if the year just gone had made her a great deal older. She felt out of heart; perhaps it was partly from weariness. She looked back at her high aspirations, and then at her failures. She did not know how much she was learning from her very failures. Her eye fell on the Testament which was open on the table, and she read the words: “Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.” They brought comfort to her heart. She might not be able to do great things, but at least she could do that. How wonderful to think that our Lord would reward it!

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSION.

WE cannot follow Margaret through all her life. For some time it went on uniformly. There were happy meetings with dear ones, and, above all, with her beloved brother Edward. There was the solemn day when he was ordained, and Margaret heard him take on him the holy vows of devotion to the special service of Christ, to which he had been called, and joined her prayers to his, that he might keep them perfectly. There was the daily work with her sisters, and their gradual progress not only in learning, but in the more important affair of correcting failings and acquiring Christian virtues. Margaret became more and more their counsellor and friend, and to her mother a companion and assistant in all the cares and duties, which often pressed heavily on her delicate health. To her father and her younger brother, too, she was all that a daughter and sister could be, while the poor and afflicted in the neighbourhood were continually receiving some help,

or at least sympathy from her. She had learned to be satisfied with little things, and to listen for every call to serve her Lord in His poor, or His little ones, and learned, too, to serve Him by trying to make her own heart a temple for Him. What a work we have to do there, if we only looked within! At last the means and the call to a wider sphere of usefulness seemed to come. Edward was appointed to a parish in one of our great manufacturing cities, and Margaret inherited from an old relation a sum of money. She spends most of her time in that town, working under her brother's direction amongst the poor and ignorant. There is much to sadden the heart. The very life in a great smoky town is a trial, and not a small one to one who had the intense pleasure that Margaret had in every country sight and sound; there is often much to discourage, little result apparently from great endeavours; but she goes on, working for her Lord, seeking continually to learn more and more *how* to work best, refreshed continually by the services of His Church, and sometimes cheered by seeing that her labours have been a blessing to some poor soul. She goes back to her old home from time to time, and gladdens the hearts of her parents. The family circle is still unbroken by the hand of death. Catharine is married, and living in

Scotland. Lucy has a husband and a home very near her parents. Robert is in Australia. Aunt Jane lives with her friends at Lea Grange. Amy has recovered, and is in India with her husband and children. Uncle William has fallen asleep, after a long life of usefulness, and his memory is fresh in the hearts of all his nieces and nephews, especially in that of Margaret, who feels that she owes much to his counsels and encouragements, and more it may be to his prayers. Mr. Brand is still at Oldbridge, where he has now seen a generation grow up, and many of them pass away. His sister is amongst the number who have been laid to rest in the quiet churchyard. It is soothing to Margaret to come and kneel when she is at home at the altar where she first received the Bread of Life, and to think—as she marks the changes made by the hand of Time in those she loves—to think that she and they alike are “bought with a price,” and that not a hair of their head can fall without their Father’s care.

THE END.





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